

BIBLE
SNAP-
SHOTS

Amos R. Wells



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BIBLE SNAP-SHOTS

By AMOS R. WELLS

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BIBLE SNAP-SHOTS

By

AMOS R. WELLS

*Author of "Bible Miniatures," "The Romance
of Right Living," etc.*



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2 Sam. 6, 12-23

I

DAVID DANCING BEFORE THE ARK

THE Bible camera has caught the Shepherd King at the very summit of his career. We see a dense, excited throng, surrounding a splendid procession. Headed by the high priest in his gorgeous robes, with a great company of other priests following, they are bearing in state a golden box surmounted by two golden images. All Jerusalem is making holiday, for the ark, the awful symbol of Jehovah's presence with His people, is returning to its tabernacle. We can see the arms raised high in air, the exultant swing of the marchers; we can almost hear the shrill blare of the silver trumpets and the rejoicing shouts of the singers.

But what is the centre of the picture? Not the high priest with his magnificent robes, not even the golden box, but, at the moment of the snap-shot, it is a ruddy-haired figure dancing before the ark. It is a man, doing what women are wont to do. He wears only a simple ephod, with no token of rank, but he is instantly seen to be the monarch of the nation. Watch him in his circling ecstasies. Watch him as now and again he leaps into the air and tosses his bare arms triumphantly. With every graceful movement, so abandoned to the delight of the hour yet so restrained by the perfect symmetry of his manly strength, he is the impersonation of glad worship, an embodied thanksgiving, a psalm in motion.

But the snap-shot catches the inevitable contrast. Yonder is Queen Michal, Saul's daughter, looking contemptuously out of her window, and despising David in her heart, as she is soon to taunt him with her bitter tongue. She is contrasting him with her stately father. A pretty figure of a king, this whippersnapper, prancing like a woman, in a boy's dress, lowering himself to the

common herd! Thus she snarls to her sympathizing handmaids,—Michal, the proud queen, the daughter of Saul.

Well, we must not forget that this is David's first love, the woman whose ready wit once saved his life against that same majestic Saul. Neither must we forget Paltiel, Michal's second love, for whom she might well be longing amid David's other wives. Yet we feel that Saul's daughter well deserved David's stinging rebuke, and her fate of continued childlessness.

But where, in all the world's writings, have we a more striking picture of expression contrasted with repression in religion? From David's action, the constant possibility of it and the occasional actuality of it, were born the Psalms. From such enthusiasm are born all psalms, all anthems and oratorios and cathedrals and stained glass windows and Sistine Madonnas. From Michal's sneering comment are born all religious declines, the coldness and barrenness and deadness that so often fall like a blight upon our churches.

Ah, let me learn to forget myself in serving and adoring my Redeemer! Thus only shall I come into true possession of myself, of my highest self, and thus only shall the ark abide in the heart of God's people.

Romans 16-22 II

PAUL AND THE WRITER OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

ASK most Christians who wrote the Epistle to the Romans, and they will answer promptly, "Paul." Read the great letter itself, however, verse 22 of the last chapter, and you will discover, "I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord." If Paul

was the author of that masterpiece, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Tertius was at least its writer.

There are certain writing scenes that I should especially like to have witnessed. I should like to have seen blind Milton dictating "Paradise Lost." I should like to have seen John Bunyan, as he paused in his lace-making to write about the Interpreter's house. I should like to have seen the cheery, almost blind Prescott as he dictated his "Conquest of Peru" out of his marvelous memory. And above all I should like to have seen Paul dictating to Tertius the world's greatest composition, the letter to the Romans.

I am not sure that, in spite of the glory and the wonder of it, I should have liked to be Paul's amanuensis. Tertius must have had a hard time. If one is to judge from his impetuous style, powerful and swift as a mountain torrent, Paul was a speaker as rapid as was Phillips Brooks, the despair of the shorthand writers who tried to report him. The shorthand, too, in the days of Tertius, was not very short. Neither do I imagine that Paul was altogether patient with his "thorn in the flesh," the partial blindness remaining from the Damascus road.

Sometimes the thoughts would come tumbling over one another like the onrushing waters of Niagara, and Tertius often had to beg, "A little slower, please," or even, "Won't you please give me that sentence over again?" and I am certain that Paul, his mind flashing already through the next sentence, would not like to give the preceding sentence over again.

Then there were interruptions, I am sure, in so long a letter, with more than one sitting. Decius, the centurion, came in to see how Paul was getting on with the new tents for his maniple. Phebe came to tell Paul that she was going a day earlier than she had expected, and wasn't his letter nearly ready? Priscilla came to say that supper was on the table, and getting cold. And Tertius

could not always read his notes when Paul resumed with the question, "Alas, Tertius, where was I?"

With what a rush that majestic eighth chapter must have come! Tertius could hardly have breathed as the mighty sentences poured from the mouth of the inspired philosopher. And as the closing pæan was reached, "For I am persuaded * * * Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, * * *" how Tertius's fingers must have gripped the stylus, and how his tears must have dimmed his sight of the wax tablet! Who can blame Tertius if he gave a sigh of relief with the "Amen" of chapter eleven, and as Paul set forth upon the less strenuous chapters that followed?

And who can blame Tertius if, when Paul at the end paused a minute to be sure that no one should be omitted from his list of greetings, the weary amanuensis, feeling that a little credit was due to him also, took the opportunity to insert that "I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle"? For Tertius was needed, as well as Paul, to make the Epistle to the Romans; and every great piece of work, I sometimes think, is accomplished by such a partnership of genius and drudge. And if we should have been proud to push the stylus on that great occasion, let us remember that every one of us can to-day be a Tertius for a greater than Paul.

John 12, 12-19.

III

THE WORLD'S GREATEST PROCESSION

THAT was a wonderful procession when David brought back the ark to Jerusalem, the time when in ecstasy he danced before the Lord. But it was a far greater procession when great David's greater son Himself, the living Ark of the world's salvation, entered

His capital in royal state. Indeed, of all the processions this earth has seen, from Cæsar's triumph to the march up Pennsylvania avenue after the Civil War, that procession down Olivet's slope, along the Kidron, and up the hill to Jerusalem was the supreme cavalcade.

I like to think who may have been there. Why not the man whose withered hand was made whole, so happy to use it that he plucked and threw more palm branches than anyone else? Why not some of the lepers who had been healed, rejoicing that they could mingle with a crowd once more and not hear that horrible old cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" Why not the deaf man whom Christ had restored, so glad that he could hear the "Hosannas"? Why not the Gadarene demoniac, no longer naked, but eager to take off his coat and fling it down before his Saviour?

See that man, running and leaping all the way. He is the man who was once laid daily by the Pool of Bethesda. Such cripples healed have been running and leaping down through all the centuries since.

See Bartimæus yonder, his sparkling eyes taking in hungrily all the beauty of the glittering city on its hills and the blue sky overhead, while in his heart is a joy more delightful than even physical sight can give, for the eyes of his soul have been opened upon Jesus.

See Lazarus, back from the dead, but nourishing in his heart a life that is better than the most abounding life on earth, for Christ had called him friend.

See the owner of the colt on which Christ is riding, happy as all have been happy ever since that have had the smallest share in one of Christ's triumphs.

Look upon the beaming Twelve, rejoicing more than the others because they have shared the hardships of the Messiah, and realize through those toils what is the meaning of this day.

And I think that many women were there, for Christ, after all, did more for women than for men. I see His mother, her heart full of unutterable things. I see

Martha and Mary, and the Magdalene, and the woman who touched His garment's hem, and the widow of Nain, and the Samaritan, and Simon's mother-in-law, and perhaps even the Syro-Phoenician.

And I can see also a great host out of all ages past, looking eagerly on. Was not John the Baptist there? Were not Moses and Elijah, and David and Samuel, and Abraham and Jacob, and Daniel and Isaiah? I think of these as watching all of Christ's triumphs ever since.

Let us forget that the critics were there, rebuking the extravagance of the Hosannas, as they have rebuked all hosannas and hallelujahs throughout the Christian ages. The contemptible small fry!

And let us not say, as so many do, that this was the fickle crowd which was so soon to shout that awful "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Those critics, I am sure, were the only ones that were in both companies.

Still that triumphal procession is moving down the ages, the procession of those that have been healed and blessed by the Saviour of mankind. It is growing greater from year to year, taking in men and women of all countries and tongues and conditions. Some joyful day it will include every soul on earth, and will enter in final triumph the New Jerusalem.

IV

2 Kings 6, 1-7

THE FLOATING AXE-HEAD

THERE is no harm in adding a little by our imagination to these wonderfully condensed Bible stories, if we are careful to add nothing unreasonable or unlikely. It is astonishing, however, to see how seldom any addition is needed to render vivid even a two-verse or a three-verse narrative; it all seems to be there. This is

the case with the account of Elisha's miracle of raising the axe-head from the bottom of the Jordan.

What is the meaning of this scene, so much derided by the sceptics?

We must remember, in the first place, that iron was scarce and valuable in those days. You recall that Saul and Jonathan were the only ones in the Hebrew army that possessed a sword and a spear; and, though matters were vastly improved over those days, still iron was almost to be ranked as a precious metal. The critics would not sneer if Elisha had worked a miracle to bring up from the depths a golden crown, but iron is a manlier and a nobler metal than gold.

Then, too, that axe-head was borrowed. The prophet's honour was at stake. The episode is worthy of immortal honour for its lesson in the returning of borrowed things. Perhaps that is why this miracle is not so popular as some others! It is especially important for God's people to be strict in their business honour, in the payment of debts, and that principle is well worth emphasizing by a miracle.

Besides, Elisha's young friend and pupil was much troubled over the loss. Elisha was a man of deep and effective sympathy. See how many of his miracles were worked to help folks in trouble: restoring to life the Shunammite's son, healing the bitter spring, multiplying the widow's store of oil, removing the poison from the mess of food, healing Naaman, feeding a hundred hungry men. The miracle is worth while just as a specimen of the flowering of love in little things.

Some say there was no miracle, that Elisha simply saw the axe-head lying in the water, sharpened a stick, stuck it in the hole of the axe-head, and fished it up. But if so, where else in the Bible is space taken for a nothing? Paper is cheap enough now for that, but it was not then!

But why did Elisha cast in that stick? Why did he not merely speak to the axe-head, or wave his hand?

The stick was like the clay which Christ bound on the blind man's eyes. Sometimes a meaningless bit of material gives faith a basis on which to lean. Otherwise the miracle would seem too great for belief, we should think ourselves to be dreaming. I have an idea that Elisha fashioned the stick in the form of a handle, and that the axe-head rose and fastened itself upon it.

And why did Elisha need to bid the young prophet, "Take it up"? Why did not the borrower eagerly reach out and grasp it? He was afraid to touch it; he thought it was bewitched. This is the most convincing feature of the story. Who, in a false narrative, would have thought to work it in so naturally?

But why the miracle, after all? since so many other losses have been sustained by God's people and have not been miraculously remedied. Like every miracle, this was a sign. It was a sign of Elisha's power, of God's favour resting upon him. And it was a token of God's interest in the common, daily affairs of His children. Therefore it is among the most significant of Bible events, since every day I am letting some axe-head fall into the Jordan, and every day my faith-filled prayer, if I have the spirit and power of Elisha, will make the iron to swim.

Ap. 3, 1-12.

V

MOSES FINDS HIS WILDERNESS AFLAME

WHEN Moses, the shepherd of Midian, saw that startling light of the burning bush that was not consumed, it was the end of forty fallow years. What an education those years had given him, among the mountains, out under the stars, in the broad sweep of the pasture land! Learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, he became the deliverer of his people because he was learned in all the wisdom of the desert.

Those forty years had taught him the secrets of nature. They had given vigour to his body, and therefore added vigour to his soul. They had afforded him leisure to think. He had had time to write psalms, to devise laws, to plan a state.

Doubtless the shepherd thought those forty years wasted in idle dreams and fruitless toil. Doubtless he fretted often for the life and activity of Egypt, for the cool cloisters of its universities, the books of its libraries, the bustle of its army and its court, the ease of its palaces, the association with cultured men and beautiful women, the power to do things, and even that he might mingle once more with his own ungrateful people.

But God is a wise husbandman. He knows best when to leave His human fields fallow. Moses, since his life was to yield the largest harvest for the world, should lie fallow the longest time.

Then, of a sudden, the fallow field bursts into flame! The poor acacia bush, fit emblem of that barren region and seemingly barren life, becomes such a tree as never was before or since, more majestic than the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden, a tree that is afire with God!

It is always thus with us when we have been in the desert waiting on God's will. Tending sheep or what not, we have been tending at the same time something more important than sheep. In God's good time our desert will burst forth in crimson and golden glory, and we shall see that the place where we have walked all those years, the despised wilderness soil, is holy ground. We shall take off our shoes and worship as in a temple greater than those of Egypt.

That was instantly the end of the long days under the silent sky. At once the fallow field was turned up by an insistent plough, and all the flowers of peace went under. Did Moses regret them? Did he, in the awful anxiety of the plagues, amid the thunders of Sinai, on the shame-

ful day of Kadesh Barnea, during the myriad perplexities of the wilderness wanderings, with the throngs about him, throngs of cares as of men, look back with longing to those fallow fields? And did he think with remorse of his fretting therein?

Perhaps, but not for long, I believe. For Moses was a wise man. He knew that it is all in a lifetime, thought and action, peace and turmoil, fallow and furrow. And God knows best when to turn the plough into His fields.

John 2: 41-52 VI

JESUS QUESTIONING THE SAGES

HOW I wish I might know what questions Jesus asked when He visited the Temple at the age of twelve! Of course, the divine lad was not impertinent, or self-assertive, or authoritative. I know that He was respectful and modest, and filled with the reverence and awe befitting that glorious place. Nevertheless, though He was only a boy, sitting on the ground outside a listening circle, and though the sages within the circle were the most learned men of that most learned nation, we may be sure that the questions the lad asked were better worth hearing than all the answers that they or any other questions obtained during those days.

Am I wrong in trying to imagine what those questions were? We know in what our Lord was interested when He became a young man. We know what questions He had answered by the age of thirty, and was ready to answer for the world. May we not reason backward over those eighteen years and be sure that at the age of twelve He was interested in the same matters and beginning to ask the same questions? Was not the child father to the man in His case as in the case of those whom He created?

Judging, then, from the Saviour's interests as shown in His recorded words, must not His boyhood questions have run somewhat as follows: "Who is my Father? Is He the Father of all men? Then who is my brother? Is the Samaritan? Is the Roman centurion? Is a Syrian or a Phœnician? Is a publican? And is a harlot my sister? What should I do if my brother asked for something, perhaps my coat? For whom is the Sabbath made? Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath? Would helping my brother in need be lawful on the Sabbath? Whose is this house? Whose is that trading-bench yonder? What is true riches? Can a rich man enter heaven? How? Who are truly happy? Which is nearest God, a man or a child? What is it to be born again? Where will the Messiah be born? Where will He live? Could He be a carpenter's son?"

If I am right, and these are the questions that the lad asked, what kind of answers could He have obtained? Those sages were wont to answer questions about how far up the arm one must wash that one's hands might be ceremonially clean, and whether one might brush the lint from one's robe on the Sabbath. This was a new kind of question for them, and their replies must have been stumbling and unsatisfactory indeed. Perhaps this very occasion was the beginning of Christ's withering estimate: "Scribes, Pharisees,—hypocrites!" No wonder the lad was obliged, as the record implies, to answer His own questions; and no wonder that at His answers, so novel, so revolutionary, so convincing, all His listeners were amazed.

This is largely conjecture, all this picture, I acknowledge; but I am not conjecturing when I remind myself that, whatever were His questions at the age of twelve, these are the themes in which He is interested now, the questions which He propounds to the world. Are they not therefore the themes and the questions that should most absorb every one of His followers?

VII

THE TOKEN REBEKAH GAVE

ONE of the fairest scenes in all the Bible—and in all literature, for that matter—is the scene at the well in Haran. It is evening, the time when women are wont to come and draw water for the uses of the night and early morning. By the well is an old man with ten richly laden camels rising behind him, stately in the evening glow. The attendants of the camels are waiting expectantly, but the old man gives no sign to them. He is lost in meditation.

He is the steward of mighty Abraham, Father of the Faithful. Eliezer of Damascus had held that important office many years before, and perhaps this was that very Eliezer. He would know the way hither, because it had extended through Syria. It has been a long way, plodding day after day, and there has been the Euphrates to cross with the camels; but it is all well worth while if a worthy wife for Isaac is to be found at the end of it.

Eliezer—may we not call him by that name?—has had time for many an anxious thought on the matter. What sort of girl was this Rebekah, anyway? Some vain and forward hussy, perhaps, who would bring swift discord into the happy Hebron life. How miserable Isaac would be made by such a woman! His young master was not fitted for squabbling. No, he would let the impudent chit have her own way, and he would be wretched. Eliezer ground his teeth at the thought.

But, on the other hand, was not Isaac the child of a special providence? And would not Jehovah continue to guard His gift? The maiden may be all that the most affectionate old servant could possibly desire for his young master.

"Well, we'll see," said Eliezer to himself as he plodded along; and he laid out a little programme for the unwitting maiden. "If she comes to the village well, and she is the right sort for Isaac, when I ask her for a drink, old man as I am, she will not answer me pertly and bid me draw water for myself, but she will fetch it for me prettily, and, more than that, she will draw water for my camels, too." And he prayed fervently that this might all be so.

Who would not like to have seen the fair young woman as she came to the well, surrounded, you may be sure, by a bevy of young men, all eager to carry her pitcher for her? I think they gave Eliezer many a sour look and sharp word as he proffered his request. "Leave the old fool alone, Rebekah," said they. But the maiden went sweetly down the steps to the water, and lo! the aged servant's programme was accomplished to the letter. Then Eliezer promptly flashed out the betrothal jewels, not without a triumphant glance toward the amazed young fellows, and Rebekah ran off blushing to show them to her brother Laban.

Do you think it childish, to contrive such a scene? Could not Eliezer have learned by a few inquiries the way to Bethuel's house, and have done his errand in a business-like fashion?

No scene is childish that springs from anxious affection. And besides, that little occurrence by the well at Haran has stood to all ages since as the tender parable of happy marriage. "Helpmeet"—that is what the wife is to be for the husband and the husband for the wife, ready and eager to do whatever is needed to help. A cup of cold water? Yes. Thirsty camels? Yes. Kitchen stoves and parlor carpets and ploughs and weary pens and paper? Yes. By sick beds and death beds? Yes. Ah, Eliezer contrived and Rebekah gave the precise token for a happy marriage. May it pass between every pair of lovers in all the world!

VIII

WHAT SAUL SAW AT THE STONING

SAUL and Stephen were kindred spirits. It is not surprising that the death of the martyr had, as I believe it had, a profound influence over the arch-persecutor of the early church.

They were kindred in the practical nature of their minds. Both, and not merely Stephen, were deacons, servants. Paul named at one time "the care of the churches" as his heavy daily task. Both were scholars and both were powerful orators. Both were courageous, ready to face any opposition undaunted. Both were "full of faith and power," working wonders and miracles. The charge of blasphemy brought against Stephen came to be brought more than once against Paul.

The address of Stephen before the Sanhedrin took the same course as Paul's afterwards in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia. Was not Paul's a reminiscence? And Stephen's condemnation of his people, "Ye stiff-necked, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost," Paul must often have repeated in his heart as he was compelled to turn from his brother Jews to the more friendly Gentiles.

Stephen's every movement and word must have reminded the watching Saul of the One who had been crucified. Saul may have seen Him. At any rate, he had heard how He had died. And here was one of His disciples with a dying prayer for his enemies upon his lips, in words like those of his Master. Nay, may not those very garments laid at Saul's feet by the witnesses as they went about their cruel task have reminded Saul of the robe for which the Roman soldiers had cast their dice?

Saul, like Stephen, was a man of visions. He also came to have a vision of the Son of man. He also was to see heaven opened; yes, and to be caught up into the third heaven and to hear unspeakable words. At every utterance and act of this young man Stephen, this despised Christian, Saul must have felt a new and special appeal to all that was highest and deepest in himself.

“And Saul was consenting unto his death.” That meaningful sentence, and the act of the witnesses in laying their garments at his feet, indicates that Saul had some official and causal relation to the martyrdom. I cannot resist the impression that Stephen was far more to Saul than the Acts state. I believe that this awful scene so aroused Saul’s conscience that to overwhelm its remonstrances Saul embarked upon the fierce persecutions of the church that followed. In an insane frenzy he haled to prison women as well as men—he, the ever-courteous! It was this that drove him even to distant Damascus. It was the memory of Stephen that pricked him on when he kicked so hard against the goads of his conscience. It was Stephen, most of all, of whom he thought when he declared himself to be less than the least of all the saints, not meet to be called an apostle, because he had persecuted the church of God. That was no alien thought presented to him out of the dazzling light on the Damascus road, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” His conscience had recognized himself as a persecutor all along. And at Lystra, as the stones crashed against his own shrinking body, must not Paul have felt a great joy of expiation, and have said, even in his agony, “I am atoning for Stephen at last”?

And if all this is true of the relation between Stephen and Saul, was it not well worth while for Stephen to endure his martyrdom?

IX

JESUS AND HIS GENUINE KINDRED

ONCE I saw in an infidel paper, whose abominations had caused its exclusion from the mails, the most horrible picture upon which my eyes have ever rested. I will not describe it fully, but it represented a sharp-featured man sitting indoors surrounded by a company of vulgar-appearing rascals, their toes turned up in the enjoyment of some joke and a grin upon their bestial faces. Outside were a woman and several children, the woman's hands stretched out toward the sharp-featured man inside. And the title beneath the wretched drawing was, "And they said unto him, 'Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.' And he answered them, saying, 'Who is my mother, or my brethren?' And he looked around about on them which sat about him, and said, 'Behold my mother and my brethren!'"

How truly one sees, even in the face of Jesus Christ, only what one brings within one's self the capacity for seeing! The sufficient punishment of such men is their own abiding and awful loss.

It would be interesting to know the exact relation between Jesus and His earthly home. He had been driven from Nazareth to Capernaum by the assault of the unbelieving crowd. His mother, we are told, treasured in her heart all the indications that He was the Messiah, and we cannot believe that she was ever untrue to the highest faith in Him. But His brethren, we are told in so many words, did not believe in Him. What an argument is this information for the honesty of the Scriptures, if the infidels cared to be honest themselves! And now these four young men, James and Joses and Simon and Judas, bring-

ing their mother along as a persuader, had come to get possession of Jesus and carry Him off bodily from what seemed to them His crazy and dangerous work. That is why we are told, in a preceding verse which the infidels never quote in this connection, that "His friends went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, 'He is beside Himself.'" And that is why Christ's brothers sent word to Christ instead of going up to Him themselves, which they might have done as easily as their messenger: they wanted to entice Him away from His disciples, that they might not be hindered in their plot.

It is no wonder that to these unsympathizing brothers Christ's work seemed insane, thus to offend all the powers of the state, thus to go counter to all the sages and holy men, and thus to pretend to be the Messiah, without an army or even a single sword! And the hostility gathering against Him would assail His brothers also, likely as not! Plainly, a fit subject for a strait-jacket.

How hard when a man's foes are those of his own household! How hard when these tender ties, so closely akin to the best, are used to pull us from the best! And how likely the world is to misjudge one who is in this position! Christ, who was tempted in all ways as we are, must continually have been tempted in this way, and at no time more poignantly than in this scene.

How should He answer? Should He deny His own? or upbraid them? bid them watch His miracles of love and listen to His words of wisdom? That would be to proclaim their remissness. That would place a barrier between Him and His brothers, who were to own Him, though after His death. Besides, His mother was waiting also, perhaps ignorant of the plot.

Christ's answer is full of dignity and firmness, yet it has wonderful tact. He answers His family's exclusion of His ideals and His work by an inclusion. He turns from those inimical to His life to those that are friendly.

28 JEROBOAM WOULD DECEIVE JEHOVAH

He does not say, "These so-called brothers are no longer brothers of mine"; but He does say,—and the infidels do not quote these words,—“Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother.” Did He not raise His voice then, as if beseeching His kindred outside to come into the family circle of the household of faith? And does He not also beseech us?

X

JEROBOAM WOULD DECEIVE JEHOVAH

THERE was a good reason why Jeroboam, king of Israel, should send to Ahijah, the prophet of Jehovah. When a man's son is sick, the father in him will get down on its knees to anyone. How many miracles, in both Old and New Testament, were called out by father love and mother love! How many miracles have these loves worked through all the ages since!

And there was a good reason, the best of reasons, why Jeroboam, king of Israel, should trust Ahijah, the prophet of Jehovah. It was this same Ahijah who had met the ambitious and able young man, long before when he was a trusted officer of the golden King Solomon, and the prophet had torn his new garment into twelve pieces, with an absorption in his message which later prophets may well imitate, and had given ten of those pieces to Jeroboam, with the pleasing information that they represented ten tribes that should pass from the control of Solomon's house to his own. And the strange prophecy had strangely come to pass, though Jeroboam had been helped of God partly because he was not slow to help himself. Surely Jeroboam had the best of reasons for trusting Ahijah.

And there was also a good reason why Jeroboam, king of Israel, should fear Ahijah, the prophet of Jehovah,

fear him so much that he sent the queen to Ahijah in disguise, to obtain by stealth and under cover his prophecy regarding the sick boy. For Jeroboam, plainly raised to the throne by Jehovah, had chosen, for vain reasons of state coupled very likely with reasons of personal iniquity, to establish idolatry in his kingdom in place of the pure religion. It is not to be supposed that Ahijah had held his peace, and it is certain that Jeroboam's conscience had not held its peace, either. There was therefore a good reason why Jeroboam should send the mother in disguise.

But with all these good reasons, there was no good reason for the attempted deceit of the half-blind old prophet. Since Ahijah had already proved his prophetic gifts, and was expected to illustrate them again, how could he be deceived by a shallow disguise? Though the prophet's blindness might seem to leave his servant only to be deceived, yet Jeroboam knew that Ahijah's sight did not depend upon his outer vision.

Indeed, Jeroboam's idolatry had blinded his own eyes and besotted his understanding, or he would have known that there was only one way to gain a favourable answer from Jehovah's prophet, namely, to go himself to Ahijah, to make manifest his sincere repentance, to implore Jehovah's pardon, and submit himself humbly to whatever punishment might be imposed. But even his boy's deadly sickness did not move Jeroboam to this righteous course.

We are sorry for the broken-hearted mother, at once discovered in the futile trick; but she was joined to Jeroboam's sins. Only the sick lad was found sinless, and he was soon mercifully taken out of all that folly and misery to a happy heaven.

How often, like Jeroboam, we rely upon disguises with our God! We cheat ourselves, perhaps, but how can we expect to cheat Him with our good intentions which we know we do not intend, our fancied remorse which we know plans to get as close as possible to the evil again, our gifts to good causes which we know are of the nature of bribes? For every such silly deception God has only

one answer, the words that Ahijah spoke to the wife of Jeroboam, "Why feignest thou thyself to be another?" For everyone is surely seen precisely as he is.

XI

PAUL'S "I TOLD YOU SO"

I HAVE always had a profound satisfaction in Paul's "I told you so." You remember when he said it, for no one ever had a better chance to say it with emphasis. He had warned the officers of the ship not to venture from their safe harbour in Crete, and they had paid no heed to him, and now they were all in hazard of their lives as a consequence. "Sirs," said Paul, "ye should have hearkened unto me." And I for one am glad that he said it.

To be sure, Paul had every need to be popular. He was a prisoner, subject for his very necessities, not to say his comforts, to the whims of a Roman centurion and his soldiers and the captain and sailors of the ship. Yes, and subject for his safety and even his life to the report they might make of him at Rome. And people who say "I told you so" are not at all likely to be popular. The "I am wiser than thou" air offends people's pride quite as much as the "I am holier than thou" air. We may be obliged to admit the superior wisdom, but we do it through our clinched teeth.

And Paul was a man that was eager to be all things to all men, not to offend the sensibilities of any, but be conciliatory with everybody. Why should he, then, say "I told you so"?

And Paul was one that would imitate the lowliness of Christ. He would be as refuse, he would be anathema, he would count himself less than the least. How should he show pride of opinion, and say, "I told you so"?

What if it was true? Certainly they had had nothing but bad fortune since they left Fair Haven. They had been driven back and forth in fierce storms for many days, without sight of sun or moon, the ship held together with desperate bands of ropes, and now they were facing death. They would have been in the snug harbour of Fair Haven if they had taken Paul's advice. What if it was not the best possible harbour? It was better than none.

But, on the other side, how could Paul reasonably have expected them to give heed to him? He was only a prisoner, and no sailor, though he had been a great traveler. How could he expect his advice to be taken against that of the centurion and captain and the ship's owners? Yet he said, "Ye should have hearkened unto me."

Well, why not? "I told you so" may be said, not to the honour of man, but to the praise of God. In the same breath that said, "I told you so" Paul said, "God, whose I am and whom I serve." Paul had other messages to give for that God, and he wished to gain better heed for them.

Yes, Paul was right. There are many times for not saying, "I told you so," but there are times for saying it. There is a time for abasement and there is a time for exaltation, though there is never a time for self-exaltation. Always when we say "I told you so" it must be with a motive far beyond self-praise or the condemnation of others for stupidity. Always the motive must be to win a hearing for the messages of God, "whose we are and whom we serve."

XII

PETER JUSTIFIES HIS NAME

IT is a quiet space in the storm that is so soon to break with fresh fury upon the heads of our Lord and His disciples. They are not running away, but they are biding God's time. They are refusing to let the enemy select the time and the scene of the final conflict.

There in the north country, in full sight of the vast rock masses reaching into the skies, the rock-foundation of Christ's church was laid.

Think of it! Only six months before the crucifixion, and still no adequate confession of Christ's deity! How divine was the patience of Jesus! How it puts to shame our human fretfulness and our faithless haste for outward results!

It is not surprising that Peter was the first to make that confession. The most surprising thing about it is that Peter had not long ago come to a decision and spoken it out. Such delay was not like Peter.

But he made amends when he did speak. It was a well-rounded, clear-cut, firm, splendid testimony, which has placed Peter's name upon the glory-list of all eternity. I know no reason why just such a testimony may not be given by anyone, with just as much glory attaching to it.

And yet in Peter's confession of Jesus as the divine Messiah there were involved all the elements of weakness that inhered in Peter the man. It was rock, and "Peter" means "rock"; but there are all kinds of rock. I think that the rock of Peter's confession was granite.

Now granite is made up of three minerals—quartz, feldspar, and mica. Take up a piece of granite, and the flat yellow bits in it, the bits that you can scale off layer by layer with the point of a pin, are the mica. If the other two elements are there, but instead of the mica is

tough hornblende, not in layers at all, and not at all with mica's golden glitter, then the stone is syenite and not granite.

Look again at the granite, and you will see bits of a stone with flat pink or white crystal faces, of a pearly lustre, and not hard enough to scratch glass. That is the feldspar, and the frost and rain disintegrate it into our common clay.

What is left—the transparent white grains of the granite, each hard enough to scratch glass—is the silica or quartz; and that is the part of the granite that really counts.

Now Peter's quickness was the mica in that rock-testimony of his. The testimony was bright and flashing and splendid like the mica.

And Peter's stupidity and egotism and obstinate folly and faithlessness were the feldspar in the granite, easily crumbling into common mud.

And Peter's essential firmness and nobility of character were the solid quartz in the granite of his confession. Christ saw the quartz, and that it would endure.

There is one thing that can happen to granite to transform it into a stone of vast solidity and permanence. The feldspar in it can decay and fall into mud, which the rains will wash away. As the granite falls to pieces thus, the mica bits also will float off upon the water. There will be left only the quartz sandgrains. After many centuries the great accumulation of these will lower itself into the earth's crust and become acted upon by the hot interior forces, pressed together and fused together, and then when it is upthrust by some cataclysm or other it will not be granite, it will be quartzite, pure quartz with no weakening feldspar or mica in it.

This fiery trial came to Peter. It removed the feldspar and the mica, and it left him a rock that all the storms of this hostile world could not destroy. Upon such rock Christ built His church.

XIII

JOSEPH AT THE HIGHEST

ONE of the reasons why the story of Joseph is the favourite Old Testament narrative is because it presents so stimulating an example of severe temptation stoutly resisted.

Joseph was at his highest, not when he was exalted to be second in the greatest realm on earth, but when in superb purity he held his manhood firm before the wiles of Potiphar's wife.

Thus David also was loftiest, not when he wielded the sceptre of the Hebrew kingdom, not even when he wrote the Twenty-third Psalm, but when he refrained from killing his sleeping enemy, Saul.

Even as to our Lord Himself, if at any time He was more sublime than at others, was it not in the midst of the first agonies of the crucifixion when He cried out, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"?

How great was Joseph's temptation! He was a young man, and the blood was hot within him. He was a properly ambitious young man, and what a hold over Potiphar, what an easy stepping-stone to power, might have been afforded by an intrigue with Potiphar's wife! Two of the most importunate of passions urged him on.

But I do not suppose he ever stopped to think of these things. As one token of heroism is that it is uncalculating, that the brave deed is the spontaneous outgoing of the brave heart, so this instinctive turning away from foulness is one of the regal tokens of purity.

I was in Paris once with a friend, and we were standing in the evening on a crowded street examining our maps of the city, and thus making it plain that we were strangers. One of those fiends that swarm around that

metropolis of vice softly approached my friend and began to show him some indecent pictures. I shall never forget the explosive "No!" that followed my friend's first glimpse of them. It almost blew the rascal from the boulevard, and he slunk away without a word.

In such a "No!" lay Joseph's only safety. What if he did leave behind him the incriminating tunic? What if it did mean the transforming of that tunic into the coarse prison coat? It meant the rich robe of the prime minister a little farther on.

True, Joseph's deed seemed to exile him from palace to prison; but in reality it sent him at once into the most beautiful and lordly of all palaces, the palace of an approving conscience.

How little practical belief we have in Christ's promise of blessedness to the persecuted! How hypocritical often is our assent to the saying that it is woe to us when all men speak well of us! Fortunate indeed is it for us, though we do not think it, when the Potiphar's wives give us a bad name!

Joseph stands as an abiding lesson to all that are approached by the Delilah of riches, fame, power, and selfish ease. She offers what she can never give. She threatens what she can never perform. It is absurd to deny her attractiveness and power. The only safety against her is the greater attractiveness and power of the Desire of all the nations, the One altogether lovely. In His strength we may, like Joseph, come off more than conquerors from every foul temptation.

XIV

ELIJAH'S STRANGE BAKERY

THE great life of the prophet Elijah was associated in all its parts with the opening heaven. At the very start of the wonderful history we find his food falling from heaven. Later, fire falls from heaven upon his sacrifice. Then, rain falls from heaven according to his prophecy. Then, God comes from heaven in the tremendous scene on the mount in Sinai. At last, by a chariot of fire, Elijah was taken up into the heaven near which he had been so closely all his life.

Elijah himself seems almost to have dropped from heaven, for his story begins abruptly, in his full manhood, with no word of ancestry or boyhood or training. Thus abruptly does John the Baptist come upon the stage, and Paul; almost, Christ Himself. It shows how little value is in our stilted and elaborate biographies, and how condensed may be the libraries of heaven, where significances and not mere appearances are set down. It is a deep question for any man whether he has yet begun to furnish material for his biography or only for his diary.

Boldness for God is always accompanied with profound personal humility. Elijah's confident prophecy to the king that a drought would come "according to my word" might seem like pride; but when the drought did come, Elijah did not pose. When God said, "Hide thyself," the prophet promptly and silently obeyed. Elijah appeared always ready to hide himself; indeed, at the time when Jezebel raged he seemed too ready to hide himself. But the desire to hide is one mark of worthiness to be shown.

The feeding of Elijah by the brook Cherith is ever an example of the good man's plenty in the midst of lack.

The psalmist had not seen the righteous forsaken nor his children begging bread.

But were no righteous persons starved in the terrible famines of China and India, or ruined in the San Francisco and Messina earthquakes? Certainly. Cheriths do not flow past every door. Ravens with their beaks full of bread do not rest on every tree.

How, then, is Elijah's experience a guaranty of God's care for His children, if even Christ hungered, and Christ's followers have often hungered all through the ages? Ah, what is valuable to us in Elijah's experience is not the brook, but God's love; not the ravens, but God's providence. What is essential in any life is not its incidents, but its revelations. We are to be interested not in Elijah's getting but in God's giving. God's character is ever the same; that is what we need to be assured of. The manifestations of God's character are endlessly varied.

And so it makes no difference whether it was ravens that fed Elijah, or Arabs, as some scholars would translate the Hebrew word. Nor does it matter whether it was bread and water as by the Cherith, or meal and oil as in Zarephath. And it is indifferent whether we are found with a big bank account or with a small one, or with none at all and a debt to boot. God is the same in all our changing circumstances, the same unfailing love, the same sufficient care, the same provision always of the best.

Therefore let us, like Elijah, seat ourselves by our Cheriths and wait God's provision in all confidence, quite careless how it will come, whether in the beaks of birds or the hands of men or through the ministry of angels. It will still be the water of life and the bread of life.

XV

JOHN'S QUESTION—AND THE WORLD'S

IT is not at all surprising that John the Baptist sent from his prison to ask Jesus that question, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"

John was an outdoor man, confined indoors; and that breeds all kinds of physical and mental ills even if the confinement is only to an office, still more when it is incarceration in a foul dungeon.

Besides, the very circumstances of the times would arouse in John's mind many disturbing doubts. There was Jesus, his own cousin, only a few days' walk distant. Why, if He was the Messiah, did He not rescue His forerunner? Why such mild reports of His work, connecting Him with a set of Galilee fishermen and not with forceful bands of revolutionists? Why would a just God allow such monstrous deeds as Herod's? Were truth and righteousness and heroism worth while, after all?

But John took the sensible course with his doubts. He did not brood over them. He did not try to solve them himself. He did not send to other men, even to the wisest men in the Sanhedrin. He sent straight to Jesus; and in this we may all imitate him, with far better facilities for reaching Jesus than he possessed.

John's question, thus wisely sent, is the world's question, and not merely the Baptist's. It is the question back of all other questions, because what men chiefly want to know is the character of God, and if Jesus was not a revelation of God we have none at all. Receive the right answer to that question, and all other questions that are worth while fall into instant solution.

And so it is of the greatest interest to perceive the

way in which Christ answered that central inquiry. Did He refer John to the long line of prophecies concerning Himself? Did He unfold the philosophy of religion and the plan of salvation? Did He issue *ex cathedra* a stern, dogmatic statement about the matter? Did He reply with a parable or a mystic saying? He used none of these methods, though some of them were often used by Him. He simply kept on doing His usual work and living His customary life. He healed some demoniacs and blind men and others, and doubtless He held some tender and wise conversations with the poor folk around Him. That was all.

Not until evening did He turn to John's messengers and bid them go back and tell John what they had seen. Our Lord's summary of the events of the day falls into two parts, and rises to a climax. The first part recites the miracles: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up."

Jesus being the Creator in human form, this supreme control of creation is precisely the most natural evidence of His nature, and is just the kind of evidence one would expect Him to give. It proves His power over His creation, and also that it is a power working in love—and that is what men chiefly want to know about the universe.

But the climax of Christian evidences, even more important and satisfying to the thinking man, is this which our Lord saved for the last, that the poor have the gospel, the good tidings, preached to them. By "poor" Christ certainly meant the poor in purse; but also He meant the poor in spirit, the meek and lowly. Others preach to the wise, the rich, the powerful, and minister to those that can best minister to themselves. True Christianity always begins with the poor, the weak, the unlearned. Thus in Europe, in Africa, India, China, missionary work has gained its first successes among

slaves, coolies, outcastes. They are the ones that most need good tidings, and it is characteristic of God to give where the need is greatest and what is most needed.

Such is the answer in history to the world's deepest question: such miracles done, such a New Testament proclaimed, such a revelation made. But it is also the answer to our present experience: blind souls are enlightened, leprous souls are cleansed, dead souls are brought to life, and to the needy is given all they lack. No ideal ever framed is more divine than this; and who guessed it till Christ disclosed it? and who has denied it after this disclosure? The question has been answered, and answered forever. In the firm assurance of that reply let all Christians live and work.

XVI

JACOB'S STAIRWAY DREAM AND WHAT IT REACHED TO

DREAMS have significance quite in proportion to the significance of the dreamers. Joseph's dream of the sheaves that bowed down before his sheaf amounted to something because he amounted to something; otherwise his brothers would have laughed at his sheaf instead of frowning at it. Jacob dreamed of angels because he had been thinking of angels before he went to sleep, or at least thinking angelic thoughts. God does not, we may be sure, send heavenly dreams to earthly minds.

Was there a connection between Jacob's stony pillow and his dream stairway (miscalled "ladder")? I think so. It was a golden staircase, I make no doubt, and I am very sure it could not have risen from a bed of down,

or from any less substantial base than those pillows of stone.

The heroic Bishop William Taylor used to carry a large flat stone with him on his missionary journeys, and used it for his pillow lest he should become effeminate. Hardships do give birth to airships, wherewith we may draw close to heaven. "Out of our stony griefs" we raise not only the Bethel altar of commemoration but the stone stairway overlaid with gold which we commemorate. Thus Stephen, looking up out of his stony grief, saw the heavens opened and the glory of God shining through. Thus Paul was caught up out of his infirmities into paradise and heard the unspeakable words. Thus John, from the midst of his stony exile on Patmos, beheld his visions of the celestial splendours.

I like to think of the throng on that golden staircase. Jacob was no solitary. A selfish, morose man would have dreamed of a stairway which he himself was climbing alone. Jacob dreamed of a stairful of glorious beings sociably going down as well as up. How seldom we read that Jacob or any other of the patriarchs was alone! They lived for all the world, and therefore in their seed were "all the families of the earth" blessed.

The Lord was at the top of Jacob's stairway. He may truly be said to have been that to which all of Jacob's life-stairways reached. We do not always approve Jacob. Sometimes he seemed to kick others down as he climbed up. But give him his due: he was ever climbing upward toward God.

That is why God, standing at the top of the dream stairway, could say to Jacob as He did: "I am with thee, and will keep thee." That was what made the place to Jacob a Bethel, a house of God. That was why Jacob could place upon the scene his pledge of the tithe. Do not misunderstand that pledge. It was not one of Jacob's close bargains. Jacob was not doubting God's word. "Since God is going to do all this for me," he virtually said, "I

will be His, and a tenth of all He gives me shall be set apart for His service." It would be well for modern Christians if they did no less.

Indeed, because Jacob was ever climbing toward God, this golden ladder proved a moving stairway, going with Jacob wherever he went and all through his life. At last he ascended upon it with the angels, and found God waiting to receive him at the top.

Such dream stairways we may build, if we will, in any life. They are made of our waking thoughts, clean, reverent, lofty, confident, trusting. Rather than lose those dream stairways we must be willing to lay our heads upon stone pillows. And we must know that, dreams though they are, they are the most substantial realities of our lives.

XVII

JOHN ON A PATMOS SUNDAY

THERE are few genuine snap-shots that the world would prize more than a photograph of the aged apostle John in his Patmos prison. I think it must have been close by the sea; and I think it was not underground or facing the steep volcanic rocks of the island, but looked outward over the Ægean. I can see him now with his longing eyes turned northeastward over the waste of waters toward his beloved Ephesus, or southeastward toward the ruins of his still dearer Jerusalem; and as the waves glitter heartlessly, and their empty booming fills his cell over and over, I can hear him murmur, "There shall be no more sea—no more exile—over there." And as the sun goes down toward Greece, and the sunset waves sink into repose, and the Ægean becomes like a flaming mirror, I can see the

glory reflected in John's eyes. They are piercing eyes, though an old man's, and they gaze far off over the shining waters as if seeing the throne beside the sea of glass, and seated upon it One whose glory outshines the sun.

So must it have been on that wonderful Lord's Day when he was in the spirit, and saw the visions that have pictured heaven ever since for those that have come nearest to it on earth. Had it been a weary Saturday? Was the jailer harsh? Did a storm blow from the north? Was the cell cold and the aged body racked with pain? At any rate I believe that Lord's Day morning broke cloudless from Asia, and its first rays lay upon the apostle's eyes with a benediction. What dreams must have been his, to precede such waking visions!

The world, after all, has good reason to be grateful for prisons, and will need to be ingenious to supply an equivalent stimulus to the spirit when virtue and wisdom and mercy have rendered them obsolete. To name only two benefits, there have come from prisons the crown of English literature, the "Pilgrim's Progress," and the crown of Hebrew literature, the Revelation of St. John.

But was the prison necessary for them—all this pain and sorrow and isolation and wasted life? No one would say that they were necessary, but certainly they were used. Certainly the soul, thus shut out from earth, was the more easily turned toward heaven; and exiled from this life, it entered in glad anticipation the life beyond. Prisons have walls, but to the ardent spirit they have no roofs. The upward way of escape is always open. One may be in chains and yet in the spirit, on the Lord's Day.

The essential thought of the Revelation is just this of the higher recompense moving above and along with the lower sorrow and loss and death. We see in that magnificent book a procession of events on earth, awful, terribly portentous. Parallel to it in heaven we see the answering compensation, the celestial interpretations,

the Christ side of them, as the golden lines parallel the dark lines of the thunder-cloud. It is Paradise above Patmos, freedom above fetters, above the long grief of this life the eternal happiness of heaven. Perhaps John might have seen all this and written all this without that prison Sunday; but, ah! we are all so glad that, since he must have the Sunday in prison, he used it as he did.

XVIII

DAGON FLAT UPON HIS TEMPLE FLOOR

ONE of the saddest of all days for the Hebrews was the day when the ark was captured by the Philistines. The great judge, Eli, fell dead at the news. The new-born son of Phinehas was called Ichabod, because "the glory was departed from Israel."

The exulting Philistines brought the ark to Ashdod into the temple of their corn-god Dagon, where they set it up as an offering. Dagon had triumphed over Jehovah! But the next morning the corn-god was found flat on his face before the ark.

"Merely an accident," said the Philistines, and set up Dagon again. The next morning there was no accident, but an evident portent. Lo! Dagon was flat on his face once more before the ark, and his head and hands were gone, and "only the stump of Dagon was left to him."

Then a plague broke out upon the bodies of the Ashdodites, and another plague of mice came upon their fields, and they were glad enough to hand over the ark, with whatever glory might go with it, to the city of Gath. Another plague there, and the men of Gath were happy to turn over the fearful visitor to the city of Ekron.

The Ekronites sensibly cried out, "Send it back"; but even thus they did not escape the plague. So the

irrepressible golden box was forthwith placed in all reverence upon a new cart, accompanied with ten symbols of the plagues made all of gold, and drawn by two milch kine. Then, though the kine had never before been under the yoke, and though their calves were crying after them from the stall, yet they steadily took their own way, undriven, back to Judah, and the men of Bethshemesh were mightily glad to see the ark. But their rejoicing was mingled with irreverent curiosity; and because they looked into the ark they also were stricken with the plague. No wonder they cried, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?"

The entire history is a parable of reverence and holy awe; a parable for the Hebrews, in the first place, who had no business to make a mascot of the ark; and then a lesson for the Philistines, and then one for the Hebrews again. It is as full of meaning for us as for them.

For we also have our ark. It is the church, its buildings and its services and its Book and its ministry and all that pertains exteriorly to religion. And we profane our ark when our church buildings cease to be places for the bending down of the soul and become places for trifling entertainments and for romps, when the music becomes jigs, when the sermons become dissertations on politics or literature, when the Bible is slandered as a fabrication, when there is such disorder in the Sunday-school as would not for a minute be endured in the public school, when the minister is no longer the great man of the village but is treated as we should not dare to treat the doctor or the lawyer or even the school-teacher.

In such a church, I sometimes think, flame should flash from the altar and the Bible, lightnings should dart from the ceiling, the pews should sink, and the pillars of the sacred house should fall upon its profaners. Really, the plague does come, only it is a plague of the soul and not of the body, the secularizing of life, the loss

of the stability and strength and comfort of religion.

The modern world, too, is full of Dagon, and they all fall when brought into contact with Jehovah-Christ. Mammon is one, and the richest man sinks on his knees at the approach of death, for himself or his loved ones. Learning is one, and the wisest sage discovers in the hour of darkness how ignorant he is of the fundamentals of life. Fashion and pride and pleasure are Dagon, and they perceive their own emptiness in the last dread hour, if not before. Heathenism is full of Dagon, and they are all falling before Christ, in India by whole villages, in Oceania by whole islands, in Korea, Japan and China by empires.

It is good for every Christian to stand daily, in imagination, in the temple of Dagon, and see the idol prostrate before Jehovah. Thus he may learn to pitch the impotencies out of his life, and exalt the ark in glad and reverent adoration. The milch kine are moving down the centuries with their new cart and its mighty burden. Make way for its triumphant entrance into your life.

XIX

THE WORLD'S GREATEST BASKETLOAD

ONCE in the Old Testament and once in the New Testament there is a letting down over a wall, and each time it is a momentous event. In the case of the two spies whom Rahab let down through a window over the wall of Jericho, the deed was so important that Rahab finds place, harlot though she was, in the hero-list of Hebrews. In the case of Paul, let down in a basket over the wall of Damascus, it was even more important, yet the names of the disciples who did the deed are unknown. Many parallels might be given, all illustrating how little

regard for persons the Bible has, and how much regard for results. We may as well take that attitude toward ourselves, we that are so greedy for recognition. We shall be far happier for it.

It was not a dignified proceeding, to be lowered in a basket, bumping down the sides of a rough wall, head sticking out at one side, feet sticking out at the other, hands tightly gripping the edges. But Paul cared nothing for dignity when it got in the way of practical results. He could stand on his dignity as well as any man when it was an advantage to the gospel. He showed that when he compelled the magistrates of Philippi to come in person and conduct him respectfully out of the jail into which they had illegally thrust him. But Paul was a man of affairs, and knew enough to let the affairs determine his course.

I wish we had a fuller account of those first days of eager preaching in Damascus. Convert's zeal is proverbial, and what a convert this was! He began at once upon the course which he never abandoned, "proving that this is very Christ." No wonder that, with such a theme, he increased in strength and confounded the Damascus Jews. A man of faith may look with pleasure upon the magnificent zeal and splendid mental powers of an infidel, sure that such a man will be claimed of Christ ere long. Standing beside a gloriously beautiful Roman Catholic church in process of construction on a hilltop I once expressed to a friend my regret that it was not of my own Protestant communion. He was of stronger faith than I, and promptly said: "Let them go on; they are building churches for us!" Paul was such a cathedral; and how that wondrous temple of his brain must have rung with anthems and flashed with lights and vibrated with processionals when first it was turned over to Jesus Christ.

But what a shock must have been that first persecution, coming upon this new zeal. What a wave of indignation must have rushed over Paul as he realized that it was

human vileness assailing the innocent, self-sacrificing Christ. And what a tumult of shame must have overwhelmed him as he recognized in it what he had himself been only a few short days before! None of the bitter persecutions that he afterward faced could have meant so much to him as that first one in Damascus.

And there they were day and night watching the city gates to kill him on his egress, as he had himself doubtless often set watchers to prevent the escape of the Christians. He was young, ardent, active. It was no time for martyrdom, with such a work of expiation yet before him. Moreover, Jerusalem must have been calling him, Jerusalem where his Lord had died, Jerusalem where he had so cruelly persecuted his Lord's followers. Paul's immediate duty plainly over in Damascus, he will get to Jerusalem as speedily as possible (unless, to be sure, it was at this time that he went to Arabia).

Did ever basket hold a burden so precious as that? Did ever ropes and arms carry such responsibility? The greater part of the Acts was in that basket. In it was Romans, and Ephesians, and First Corinthians, and Philippians, and Second Timothy. Yes, and Christian missions were in it, and Gentile Christianity, and a Christian Europe, and a Christian America—all were in that basket which went thumping down the wall of Damascus in the dark. Verily, Providence sometimes puts the wealth of all the world into the lowliest receptacles.

XX

MOSES JOINS THE TESTAMENTS TOGETHER

IT is one of the most fascinating studies to see how the New Testament reaches back into Old Testament times, or, rather, how the Old Testament reaches forward and anticipates the New Testament. This is evident in the very first book of the Old Testament, and becomes stronger and more vivid as we go on in the mighty volume.

For an instance, consider the episode of the golden calf. Nothing was more natural, nothing was more disheartening. We should think that the idols of Egypt would have disgusted the Hebrews forever with idolatry. We should think that the marvels of deliverance wrought by Jehovah would have bound His people forever to His pure religion. But not so. No sooner is Moses out of the way upon the holy mount than the people long for the flesh pots of Egyptian superstition. They are ready, as all men are, to pour gold upon the altar of their sin. Aaron puts the gold into the fire, and,—with sundry aid from graving tools,—“there came out this calf!”

Say what you will of the people's ignorance, that they were as yet only a band of uninstructed slaves; and of the people's design, that they meant to worship Jehovah with the help of this image: it is precisely this help, degrading, gross, sensual, that Jehovah forbade. It was no help, really, but a hindrance. It helped only toward sensuality and all beastliness, and Aaron and the Hebrews knew it.

Therefore Moses, the tables of the law broken, Aaron repentant, the people terrified, three thousand of them executed, must back again to the holy mountain, indignant, grieved, dismayed. It was a time for taking coun-

sel. He was needed among his people as never before or after. As never before or after he felt that he could not remain among his people. This sin must be made right with God. Nothing could be done, of leadership or progress, until it was made right. Moses felt the fundamental need for his people, the need of atonement. This has always been the one need of the world. The men of clear vision like Moses have always felt that until this atonement, this oneness with God, should be gained, all wheels might as well stop, all discussion cease. This is always the one thing next to be done.

In all the Bible, that eloquent prayerbook, there is no more eloquent prayer than the broken and heart-broken prayer of Moses upon the mount: "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy Book which Thou hast written!"

That dash is full of meaning. Put into it a sob. Put into it a falling with face in the dust. Put into it the seeming failure of eighty years. Put into it the seeming death of the hope of the world. The prayer appeared impossible of granting. How could it be answered favourably, in the face of such ingratitude, such proved incapacity for good?

But there is hope. Only a hope, but the great soul of Moses grasps it. There is no atonement in the people. They have forfeited the right to forgiveness. "But here am I, Lord," pleads Moses. "I have not forgotten Thee. I am clear of foul idolatry. And I offer myself as their sacrifice. As their eternal sacrifice. If Thou wilt accept no other expiation, accept me. Blot me, if Thou wilt, out of Thy book of life; but do not reject Thy people."

Is not that superb? And when it is magnified infinite-fold, when it is not Moses but the eternal Son of God that makes the proffer, when He pleads not for Israel alone but for the whole world, when He not only offers

the sacrifice but completes it upon the cross with the awful cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" is not the atonement that was dimly foreshadowed by Moses disclosed in its full splendour, and has mankind, sinful, awakened, terrified mankind, anything henceforth to ask or to fear?

XXI

WHEN PETER FORGOT HIS FISHES

WHAT student of literature or of human nature can for a minute doubt the exact truthfulness of the last chapter of John's Gospel, or that it was written by the same eye-witness that wrote the rest of the book? Every element of the series of pictures is photographic: Peter's taking the lead and proposing the fishing; the long night of fruitless toil; the dim light of dawn; the hail from the shore of the unrecognized stranger: "Have you caught anything?" the suggestion of where to fish; John's quick and loving memory of the former miracle and his ready discernment of Jesus; John's sudden awed whisper, "It is the Lord!" Peter's plunge into the water and swift rush for the shore; the rest with quickened oars pulling the net heavy with fishes,—it is all one of the most graphic descriptions in the Bible, a veritable series of veracious snap-shots.

We remember another time and a very different sea into which Peter also plunged to meet his Lord. We remember how John outran Peter and reached the tomb first on Easter morning, as his quick perception outran Peter's on this morning; but how Peter rushed first into the tomb, just as on this occasion he rushed first to the bank. It is all wonderfully lifelike.

Some find fault with Peter for thus deserting the boat and leaving the rest to drag in the fish. I have heard him

made the very parable of those empty-headed, selfish dreamers that waste in sentiment the good things that God has given, spend their time in singing, and waving palm branches, and forming processions and other showy details of religion, but leave their more practical brothers to do all the hard work.

But there is a time when the ideal is the most practical. Sometimes sentiment is better than industry and enthusiasm than calculation.

If Christ should appear in your street to-day, it would be a poor sort of Christian that stopped to take care of fishes, unless he did it with John's hesitant reverence. Who would wait to finish the seam, brown the biscuit, cast up the column of figures, or even lock the safe before rushing out? Zacchæus left his ledger and Nicodemus his books when Jesus of Nazareth passed by.

It is these flashes of uncalculating enthusiasm and devotion that build cathedrals, man missions, win reforms, create revivals, fill pulpits and churches. Dragging nets never does these things. Prudent calculation only sells stones for the cathedral, only passes the contribution-box.

Peter was not afraid of work. It was he, the oldest of them all, that proposed the work at first. And it was he who pulled the fishes ashore in the heavy net, as soon as the Saviour called for them. But like Mary of Bethany, Peter had a fine sense of values. He knew the best way to apply energy when the denied Messiah stood upon the shore and the craven apostle was on the lake.

Thus Peter showed what he could be when he forgot everything else in the presence of Christ. But how do you like him a little further along in the scene, when he begins to calculate, and take thought for the fishes? Hear him as he sees John following, when he would have Jesus all to himself. "And what shall this man do?"—how do you like that prudent question? Hear our Lord's sharp reply: "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

Ah, yes, Christian brothers! What to us is this man or that, what is this prosperity or the other, this set of goods or some very different outfit? Let us follow Christ. That is the only business of the Christian, and the fish-net comes in as it will. Be sure that when we do pull it in we shall find it full of fishes.

XXII

OBADIAH, A CAVE MAN

WHAT heroes we all are—behind barricades! How valiant we all are—at midnight! How easy it is, while majordomo of Jezebel's palace, to hide a hundred prophets by fifties in a cave and feed them on bread and water! For every Elijah that beards the lion in his den—and the lioness, which is worse—I could find you a thousand Obadiah's that stand ready to feed Jezebel's victims in a cave.

Yet that is high praise given to Obadiah, that he "feared the Lord greatly." Would that the praise might apply to every one of us. "Obadiah" means "Servant of Jehovah," and there is on earth no more royal title than that.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Obadiah, fearing the Lord greatly, feared men almost as much. That cave exploit was just the one for him. He was a cave hero, while Elijah was a hero of the open air. He was a hero of silence and solitude, while Elijah was a hero of the crowd. No one would think of including Obadiah in the eleventh of Hebrews. Every one knows that Elijah, though unnamed, is there.

Indeed, Obadiah is the greatest possible contrast to Elijah, the rugged, fearless prophet who had no use for caves! Elijah would not have hidden those hundred prophets, but have bidden them face Ahab and Jezebel as

he did, though he was but one. Elijah did not get his food from the king's steward, but from the king's King.

It is not surprising that such a man as Obadiah recognized Elijah at once. The Obadiahs know God's prophets and revere them. They revere them, but do not trust them fully. They fear them, as they fear all else, and fall on their faces before them, as Obadiah did.

One would think it no heavy task set Obadiah, just to go and tell the king where Elijah was awaiting him. The steward's fear of Ahab surely exaggerated the danger. Even if Elijah did vanish, the king must have been exasperated indeed if he should slay a faithful servant, especially after his experience of the difficulty of catching the prophet. But timid men make their own bogies, and then shiver before them.

Notice that Elijah did not rebuke Obadiah. The stronger a man is, the gentler is he toward the weak—physically weak, and, what is harder, those spiritually feeble. He reassured Obadiah, with a smile of pity and indulgence as if he were a child. And so Ahab was brought to Elijah, and Obadiah passes from the Bible story when he might have remained a glorious figure in it.

But why this circumlocution? Why did not Elijah, as before, go directly to Ahab? Because it was more dangerous than before, and Elijah had too much work to do to risk himself among Ahab's treacherous followers unnecessarily. Besides, it would do the king good to come humbly to the prophet at his call. And, incidentally, Obadiah himself must have been strengthened by getting a little into the open.

What was the effect upon Obadiah of the splendid scene on Mount Carmel? Did that fire, falling from his omnipotent God, inflame with a martyr's courage his timid heart? Or was he still more terrified at the death of the Baal priests and the rage of Jezebel? Probably the latter, if even Elijah ran away. And so, before we criticise him, let us make sure that we should do as well

as he did, that we are even cave heroes; and let us hope that at any rate Obadiah continued to keep open house in his cave.

XXIII

THE KING WHO STOPPED TOO SOON

THERE is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; but when a man launches his boat on that tide, he must keep on rowing just the same. Joash of Israel found that out.

The characteristics of this king appear in a parable acted out in one of the most striking of all the scenes in the Bible story. He was young, just entering upon his reign. Elisha, the great man of his kingdom, was very old, perhaps ninety. He was strong and vigorous and ambitious. Elisha was sick unto death. But he needed help, for his father, Jehoahaz, had made the country the football of the nations, and had reduced it to the lowest point of misery, weakness, and humiliation. Elisha, though old and on his death-bed, could, he was sure, give him just the help he needed. Joash knew where to go for help, and that is more than his father, Jehoahaz, knew. or his grandfather, Jehu, or most of us, for that matter.

Joash showed his manliness by a flood of tears at sight of the dying prophet. This moved Elisha to sympathy with the young man, and to new hope for the kingdom. It was long indeed since a king of Israel had wept so pure tears! There was good in this Joash. Elisha would find out how much good.

"Take bow and arrows," commanded Elisha; and they were quickly forthcoming from the king's bodyguard outside the chamber. Then in his weakness the aged prophet laid his hands upon the hands of the king holding the bow and arrows, as if to communicate to them

something of his own indomitable spirit. "Open the eastward window," commanded Elisha. Now the eastward window looked toward the nation's powerful and arrogant enemy, Syria. The king obeyed. "Shoot!" cried Elisha; and I think his trembling voice suddenly gained strength and rang out like a battle-cry. The king shot, and the bodyguard outside wondered. Then Elisha explained the meaning of the act: "That is the arrow of the Lord's deliverance from Syria. Thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, over there to the east of the Sea of Galilee, till thou hast consumed them."

Then with this interpretation in the king's ears so that he might not be in doubt, Elisha proceeded anxiously to the test. "Take the arrows," he bade the young man; and Joash took them. "Smite upon the ground!" cried the prophet, suddenly rising in his bed in his eagerness.

Weakly the young monarch tapped the floor with the arrows once—twice—thrice; and then stopped.

Elisha fell back upon his bed with a groan. He was dismayed and indignant. "Only three times!" he sighed. "Only three times to smite the Syrians! You should have smitten five or six times, and then the Syrians would have been consumed. But now—"

Why, Elisha would have beaten those arrows to pieces upon the floor. And he would have snatched up the bow and pounded it also to bits. What sort of king and warrior was this stripling, after all? So Joash left the room with his head hanging; and so Elisha died with a sad heart and many forebodings.

And it all came true. Of course, it all came true. Syria was beaten thrice at Aphek. Judah also was mightily defeated. Joash placed the kingdom on a far higher plane than it was on when he came to the throne, and made a fine preparation for the glorious reign of Jeroboam II. But Joash might have been his own Jeroboam II. He let his great deeds be done for him by another. He stopped too soon.

And there are Joashes all around us. Lucky for you

if you are not one of them. They are men of the best intentions and of fair execution, but they go only halfway toward their best. And halfway toward one's best is all the way to failure; for success is measured not by three beats but by smittings to the point of utter weariness; not by half-hearted efforts but by the whole soul; not by "quitters," however finely they begin, but by those that continue steadfastly to the end.

XXIV

THE TRIUMPH OF THE MOTHERS

THE one thing in all the world that you can always count on is a mother's love. A mother will do anything, suffer anything, dare anything, to get a blessing for her child. If "unselfishness" should drop out of our language, we should still have "motherhood."

No wonder the mothers thronged about Jesus. There is nothing more pitiful than a sick child, and nothing more appealing than a well one. To both we are eager to give. For both we are eager that they shall get all good. And here was the Good Physician, and the Great Giver.

There are many records of sick children brought to Christ, but only one of well ones. The latter is in all three of the synoptic Gospels, as being especially notable. Why? Because it was the occasion of enunciating a principle of the Kingdom of God.

Why did the disciples rebuke the mothers? Did they see superstition in the mother's desire that Christ should lay His hands upon their babes? More likely they were overzealous for the Master's peace, as in the case of the Syro-Phoenician. They were harsh with the harshness shown so readily in the East to women and children.

Their rebuke of the mothers is met by a scathing rebuke from the Lord. Not often is it said that the gentle Jesus is indignant, but He was on this occasion. That

is just what moves His hottest wrath still — any wrong to mothers and little children. That is why child labour and the saloon and the “white slave” traffic are the three great and awful sins of the age, because they all are terrible wrongs against childhood and motherhood.

What did Jesus mean by the standard of admission to the Kingdom that He set up? They were very small children, mere babes, yet of such as they, and not of such as Peter the opinionated or James the bold or even John the keen-visioned was the Kingdom of God to be composed. It was to be made up of these disciples, perhaps, but only as they were like those babes. How like them, and why?

Not like them in their ignorance, of course. Knowledge is an excellent thing, if it is humble. We can hardly know too much of creation, provided the knowledge does not, as strangely it may, draw us away from the Creator.

Not like them in their weakness. We are to be strong, but strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Not like them in their need and their dependence. A child is all tentacles, drawing ever to itself. We are to be outgiving, if we are to enter the Kingdom.

How, then, are we to be like babes? In lowliness, meekness, teachableness, humility. “Humility” comes from the Latin “humus,” ground, and it is the ground virtue, the fundamental virtue on which all else is based. If we are not humble we cannot be taught; and if we cannot be taught we can make no progress.

Christ said that we are to *receive* the Kingdom as a little child, if we get it at all. Not buy it with our merit. Not seize it with violence. Not demand it as a right. Not argue ourselves into it by process of law. Simply ask for it as a child would ask for something he wanted very much. Simply take it, as a child takes something from the hand of a loving mother.

And if we do this, then as Christ laid His hands upon those babes, so He will lay His tender hands upon us, and **ble**ss us with all fulness of joy and peace and power.

XXV

WHEN MOSES WENT TO CHURCH

THERE was great need for Moses to go to church. He had been to church for forty days and did not need more for himself just then, perhaps; but people do not go to church for themselves alone. There was great need that Moses should go to church for his people.

They had sinned a great sin. Aaron had sinned a great sin. They had set up that golden calf. They needed to go to church for themselves. Moses had been on the Mount and had made his splendid offer of atonement; but there was need of bringing the Mount down to the plain.

God would no longer lead His people. He would not bar them out of the promised land, He would be faithful to his promise to their fathers; but He would send an angel to lead them. What was an angel to those that had enjoyed the glory and protection of Jehovah Himself? So there was great need of church-going, as there always is where people have strayed from God; and that is everywhere.

Therefore Moses will not wait to carry out the elaborate pattern shown him in the Mount. A church is a place where God and man meet. It may be beneath a tree, or on a mountain-top with no roof but the sky, or in a cave, or a catacomb, or in an attic or on a crowded street corner. Some day the whole wide world will be a church as all heaven is now.

Moses did well to take his tent for the Tent of Meeting. Probably it was the best and the largest tent in the camp, and Moses henceforth used an inferior one for himself. God's house should be the best house in the town, or at

least the best tent in the camp. That tent is as good under the circumstances as a cathedral, as St. Peter's itself.

Moses did well also in throwing open the tent for the use of all. He would have no privilege that could not be every man's. On the afternoon of Christ's death the veil before the Holy of Holies was rent in twain. So also at the beginning there was no curtain, but all could enter this Holy of Holies. Democracy in religion and in the state is no new thing; it is at least as old as Moses.

But there was a difference. It did not depend upon a tent curtain, or on rank and privilege, but on men, on character. The Holy of Holies is where God meets a man. Some men would find no holy place though they lived in a cathedral all their lives; others would find a Holy of Holies in the midst of Broadway. When Moses entered the Tent of Meeting the Shekinah descended from the Mount to meet him there, and he talked with God face to face.

No wonder the people came to their tent doors and watched Moses go to church. How I wish I could have seen him! That were indeed a snap-shot worth having. His rapt face shone already with the anticipated communion. His steps were eager. A song was on his lips. His flashing eyes were forward-reaching. He glanced gladly at the Presence already moving from the Mount to meet him at the Tent of Meeting. No wonder the people watched as Moses went to church.

How is it as we go to church? Do we go to meet the actual presence of the dear Father? Is it in eager haste to greet our all-loving Friend? Is it to see and talk with our Elder Brother? Does our heart long, even faint, for the courts of our God? Do our pulses beat faster with the exultation of it? Is a light in our eyes? Is a song in our soul? Is our church indeed to us a Tent of Meeting?

In proportion as it is, the people will look from their windows and bless us as we go by. Better still, they will snatch their hats from the rack and follow after us.

XXVI

THE FIFTIETH DAY—AND TO-DAY

WHEN a revival has obtained many converts we commonly call it a Pentecost. The three thousand converts to Christianity were a result of what happened on that famous fiftieth day after the Great Passover, but they were not an essential of it; nor are Pentecosts always attended by conversions, though they are likely to be.

The narrative of that first Christian Pentecost is very simple and very wonderful. The conditions were these: A risen Christ, fully apprehended in His divine majesty, ardently loved for His marvelous gifts to men. His followers united in this understanding and love—not in a theological system, since there had been no time to form one, nor in ecclesiastical bonds, since there was happily as yet no ecclesiasticism to separate them; but they were united in love and faith, which alone can unite men. Finally, Christ's followers, thus united, were all in one place, the physical basis of the spiritual miracle that was to follow.

Those conditions being granted—and they are possible anywhere where there are Christians, if only two of them—what are the essentials of Pentecost? They are three.

First, Pentecost consisted of a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, filling all the house where the disciples were. What is essential in this? The sound of the wind? We can get it any day when the wind is blowing. We can imitate it any day when the wind is not blowing. The essential is that "from heaven." The essential is the feeling of the other world, of supernatural power, of the divine moving upon the human.

Second, Pentecost consisted of the mysterious light filling the room, centered in tongues of light flaming from each head. What is essential here? The actual vibrations of the ether? Surely not. Every living body, as the scientists are beginning to prove, gives out some light. What is essential is the spiritual clarity, the divine illumination, in the radiance of which men see what they have not before seen of themselves and God and God's universe.

Third, Pentecost consisted of the speaking with tongues. What is essential in this? That each heard his own language spoken from these previously one-langued men? No, for they had heard their own language before and would hear it again. The essential was that they heard "the wonderful works of God." It was what the disciples said that brought conviction, rather than the exceptional fact that each heard it said in his own tongue.

If these are the three Pentecost essentials, as I think they are, then we can have a Pentecost in any prayer meeting or Sunday-school class or in the church on any Sunday morning, though only Christians are present, and only three or thirty of these and nowhere near three thousand. We can have a feeling of God's presence, and a clear vision of divine truth, and a free utterance of our spirits in view of God's presence and this new vision.

I am not denying the reality of the supernatural occurrences on the day of Pentecost. I believe in them wholly. I am not "spiritualizing them away." They may not occur to us in the same outward form, but I do believe that everything most precious and valuable in them occurs to us, and that the first Pentecost is a paradigm of the Pentecost that may be yours and mine to-day.

Nor will our Pentecost be less marvelous than Peter's and John's. To realize the presence of God is more wonderful than to hear the wind blow, though it blow from the skies of Paradise. To see God's truth is more wonderful than the aura of any saint, and to speak of

God's wonderful works in the English language to any set of Americans is as great a deed as to speak in a single breath all the tongues of Pentecost.

XXVII

ZIMRI, KING FOR A WEEK

AMONG all the kings of Israel and Judah, Zimri had the shortest reign; but he managed to cram into it enough wickedness to fill seventy years instead of seven days.

For what sin is worse than treachery? It is the Judas sin. It is murder of all that is highest in life, and physical murder is an easy consequence.

Zimri was the trusted general of King Elah. That Elah was a drunken wretch made no difference in Zimri's iniquity, though doubtless Zimri used Elah's sins to excuse his own. But sins are not to be excused in that easy fashion.

Sent against the Philistines with his fellow general, Omri, Zimri was in the first place a traitor to Omri and the rest of the army, taking his own half of the troops and abandoning the siege that he might advance his own selfish interests.

Then came the great treason to his master, Elah, whom Zimri killed with the soldiers that owed allegiance to him. This treachery was extended to all of Elah's kin, whom Zimri destroyed to make himself secure upon the throne.

Probably that very security was Zimri's undoing, causing the people and the army to turn from so great a villain. At any rate, the army offered Omri the crown, and he was not slow in accepting; not slow, either, in capturing Tirzah, the capital, and cooping up Zimri in the citadel-palace.

Then Zimri completed his treachery by the suicide which is treason against one's self, burning over his own head the palace in which he had probably often made sycophantic pledges and protestations to Elah and his father Baasha.

Yes, and Zimri had added to all this treachery to men open treason against God, since the historian declares that the seven-days monarch died for his sins of idolatry. His crimes against men were also sins against God.

Well, Zimri had had his fling. He had played the game and lost. He had won the crown of a little earthly kingdom for a week, and he had lost the heavenly crown for all eternity.

Some would call him bold, dashing, heroic. To be sure, there are those whom the world dubs "the Great," who have ruled for many years instead of a few days, who exhibited qualities no higher than Zimri's ignoble ambition, and who have ever since had at least one worshiping biographer a century. But there is no essential difference; it is a minor point that one succeeded and the other did not. Were it not for this minor point it would now be, probably, "Zimri the Great." Each has thrown honour to the winds, and lived only for self. Each has grasped a sceptre, though with bloody hands, and mounted a throne, though it is based on dead men's bodies and washed with widows' tears.

After all, let a man gain seventy years of success, thus won at the expense of true life, and what is it but a week or less in the measureless reaches of eternity? What eons of blessedness did Napoleon barter for a few weeks of cruel time! What ages of satisfied ambition did Alexander throw away when his lower ambition was satisfied only in part! Every Zimri is a millionaire buying at the cost of his entire fortune a hollow orange.

Let us see that we do not fall into Zimri's terrible folly on the smaller stage of our own lives. We may have an acre for his kingdom, a hovel for his palace, and a few

neighbours for his army ; but the sin of Zimri is not in the scope of it. It is entirely possible to be a Zimri in a four-room cottage of a country town. The only security against it is a heart full of love for God and man.

XXVIII

PILATE GIVES A DIFFICULT EXHORTATION

PILATE, driven by an uneasy conscience and impelled by the dream-fear of his wife, had exhausted all the resources of a coward. He had tried argument ; he had tried substitution ; he had tried Herod ; all was in vain. Finally he bethought him to try Jesus Himself. So he ordered the divine prisoner to be brought forth, streaming with blood from His wounds, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And as a hush spread over that savage throng Pilate said sternly to them, " Behold, the man ! "

What picture painted by a brush less subtle than God's light itself could do justice to such a scene ? See the crafty governor, his face tense with anxiety. See the sneers frozen on the faces of scribes and Pharisees. See the Roman soldiers, stirred out of their usual immobility. See in the outskirts of the crowd John, his face white and worn, and Peter, his eyes red with weeping. But you will give only a glance even at these, for the central figure draws and holds.

Ah, the majesty amid all that indignity ! the beauty that shines through the streams of blood ! the invincible serenity that makes Him the one point of calm in all that turmoil of sin and range and suffering ! " Behold, the man ! " Who can help beholding him ? " I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself. " The crucifixion had already begun, and already He was drawing men to Himself. Only

in heaven shall we know how many Christians were made that hour in the prætorium.

And yet of all the beholders how few really beheld Him! Indeed, did any actually see Him? Did not the crown of thorns and the purple robe and the veil of bloody rivulets hide Him from the eyes of their souls?

“Behold, the man!” The type man. The one perfect man. The man in whose image we were made in the pure beginning. The man into whose image we are to grow, and into the fulness of His stature. Behold, the one sole Man of all the ages! Have you yet seen him in Jesus Christ?

We find it hard to behold Him, because we lack the eyes. Only the pure in heart can see God. None but the pure in heart have eyes to behold the Son of God. We shall be like Him, when we see Him as He is. The being like Him and the seeing Him, in fact, are only different sides of the same experience.

Do you wish you had stood in Pilate’s hall? Do you think you could have beheld the Man if you had been there? Nay, by every century since that year you should be able to behold Him better. By all His presidency in His church, by all His care of His followers, by all the tender mercies of His Holy Spirit, the world should see Him better every day. Praise God that you are living now, and seek with all your heart to enter into your great inheritance of vision!

XXIX

THE KING THAT DRANK UP HIS KINGDOM

ONCE I printed, in a paper which I edit, an engraving made from a snap-shot of a group of prisoners. The foreman of the paper came to me and protested. “Some of those men,” he said, “may reform after they

get out of prison or while they are in it; and then think how that picture will be coming up against them!" I printed the picture in spite of his protest, because the purpose I had in view was important enough to warrant it, and because, to tell the truth, the snap-shot was so poor that I did not believe the prisoners' nearest relatives would recognize them!

The Bible, however, is full of just such snap-shots, tremendously stern and unsparingly accurate. One of the most terrible and graphic of them is that of Elah, king of Israel. Only two or three verses, the entire biography may be covered with one's thumb; but the whole record of shame is there: "As he was drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, his steward, Zimri went in and killed him, and reigned in his stead."

There, in five words, is the portrait of a sot. There, in eight more words, is the sot's fate. It is cutting as a lash, and as scornfully brief.

In place of the sensuous paintings placed upon the walls of saloons in the bad old days, how I should have liked to put some of these Bible sentences! As they would not be permitted there, for very evident reasons, let them be burned into the minds of the young before they are tempted to go into any such place. Let us emphasize the temperance lessons of the Sunday-school and the young people's society, but more than those, let us fill our homes with the atmosphere of temperance. It is for this purpose that the Bible has been made a pillory, that the lives thus held up to scorn may not be duplicated.

Every town has many an Elah who is drinking up his kingdom. Perhaps such as Elah is now standing in your shoes. The glass in which the kingdom is dissolved is any sinful pleasure. It may be a maddening liquor. It may be secret lust, still more maddening. It may be dishonesty, or the avarice that leads to theft. It may be the glittering glass of selfish ambition. There are many kinds of liquor with which one may drink one's self

drunk, and those that drink one kind are likely to think all other sorts intoxicating but their own. Every one of them, however, is a powerful solvent for kingdoms.

No one at first sees his kingdom crumbling away into the glass of his sinful pleasure. He takes up a bit of it at first and tosses it lightly in to sweeten the compound, or give it a whiff of spice. The kingdom is still left, practically intact. After a while the poor fellow realizes what he has been doing. After a while he can see the image of his lost kingdom mockingly glancing at him out of every sparkle of the Satanic liquid he is drinking. It is the kingdom of his lost health, all the fine strength and steady nerves and clear vision dissolved away. It is the kingdom of his lost mentality, his keenness of apprehension, his tenacity of memory, his delicacy of wit, his faculty of invention. It is the kingdom of his lost soul, his purity, his peacefulness, his honour, his prayers. It is the kingdom of his home, the happiness of wife and children, the good-night kiss, the morning greeting, the happy breakfast table, the reports from school, the co-operation in honourable toil. It is the kingdom of his friendships, that make this earth a larger home. It is the kingdom of heaven, here and hereafter. "Drinking himself drunk * * * Zimri killed him, and reigned in his stead"—all his kingdom, all his many kingdoms had been dissolved away and recklessly swallowed.

Some say that Arza must have been in the plot with Zimri. That may well be. Arza is the tempter to vice, and it is the tempter's business to get kingdoms away from kings. But, after all, Elah was the king, and Arza was only his steward. It is the business of kings to rule.

XXX

THE DEAD GIRL WHO WAS ONLY ASLEEP

THE chief use of money," once said a rich man to me, "is the ability it gives one to provide the best help and comforts for the sick of one's family." His own sad experience led him to make the remark, and my own quickly confirmed it, in a measure.

Similarly, I think that Jāirus, the ruler of the synagogue, must have felt, as the clamouring and pushing crowd fell back respectfully before him and his great need, that the chief use of his important office was to obtain for him ready access to the Good Physician. He did not realize, as that poor woman in the outskirts of the crowd did, that the merest touch of faith, reached out to Christ in the midst of the densest throng on earth, would be as effective as his own impressive plea with the whole city to back it.

Ask Jāirus what is the most beautiful age for a little girl to have, and he would have said twelve. That is what you would say about your little girl,—inserting her different age! "She is dying!" he groaned (in one Gospel). "She is dead!" he groaned (in another). "How the Gospels contradict each other!" the critics exult. Foolish and short-sighted critics they are, not seeing that this little difference is the very badge and assurance of authenticity, since the distracted father, leaving the house as his little girl was dying, would say just those two things, as hope fought with fear and despair.

And yet how did Jāirus regard death? Evidently as only a sleep in the presence of Jesus; only a sleep from which she was to be awakened by a touch from that

wonder-working hand. His was just the faith to delight our Lord, and to evoke a miracle.

And so when the messenger comes running from the house with the dread tidings of the little girl's actual death—"And do not trouble the Master further,"—Jaïrus hardly needed, we may believe, Christ's reassuring "Fear not; only believe." But we need the assurance, and so did those around Jaïrus.

Certainly those around the synagogue-ruler needed it. Did you ever hear the wild death-shriek of an Eastern village? It begins around the death-bed as soon as the breath has left the body. It is caught up by the neighbours as they hear it and run promptly to the house. It spreads rapidly until half the village is wailing up to heaven. The hired mourners, too, were instantly on hand, adding to the din with their doleful unmusical instruments. What a mockery to the majestic presence of death! What an insult to the high mood of Jaïrus and his Lord! No wonder that Christ was indignant. No wonder that He drove them all away, protesting, "She is not dead, the little girl. She is only asleep."

That laugh of scorn—how it echoes down the ages! How it rises in our own hearts as we bewail our dead, as we fall to doubting our immortality!

And now if Christ had sought cheap renown, if He had based His influence upon His miracles and wished to enlarge His circle of curious followers, how differently He would have acted and spoken. "You may well wail," He would have said. "The girl is dead indeed, stone dead. Bear witness to that. Come into the room; see her hand fall lifeless when I lift it up; note her fixed eyes; feel here: the heart is entirely still. And now, watch me, O men of Capernaum!"

Christ was always heedless of Christian evidences, and by that very heedlessness supplied the best of Christian evidences. He drove out the idle crowd of skeptical mockers, and thereby made room in that death chamber

for the reverent and wise of all the ages since, for all the Johns and Jameses and Peters.

How simply the marvelous deed was done!—"Maiden, arise!" Thus simply will He awake us, some day, from our short and dreamless sleep. "Give her to eat," He said, when she arose. Will He not say that for us when we arise? And what will be our first meal in heaven! Meat indeed it will be, and drink indeed, worthy of the wonderful life to which we rise. And as the strength and exhilaration of that food pass through the veins of our new bodies, we shall think, not that we have been awakened from slumber, but that we have never been truly awake before; that all our life on earth has been a sleep.

XXXI

EBED-MELECH EARNS A PROPHET'S REWARD

THE test of a man is his friendships. As friendship is the highest activity of a man, so it is his severest test. When Christ can say to His disciples, "Ye are my friends," without adding any qualifying "if," He has crowned them with the supreme approval.

It is not easy to be a friend in prosperity. It is easier to be a flatterer or sycophant or imitator or hanger-on. But it is still harder to be a friend in adversity; for then there is nothing to gain in friendship except the priceless invisible things, and everything to lose—of the worthless highly valued things.

These tests of friendship are all the time exposing the base metal under the gilding and the gold under the grime. It was when all forsook Him and fled that Calvary began indeed for Christ. It was when Jonathan was true to David in the face of his father's wrath that

the shepherd boy entered into his kingdom. And it was in Jeremiah's adversity that a high friendship was discovered in Ebed-melech.

Friendship could scarcely be put to a harder test. Against Jeremiah and his exhortations to yield to the encompassing Babylonians was the weak-kneed king, Zedekiah, and nearly all the nobles, and probably all the generals and the greater part of the citizens. The object of Ebed-melech's friendship had been thrown into a deep dungeon, knee-deep in filth, sickening with foul air. He was poor, and left to starve. All the dictates of prudence bade Ebed-melech, "Hands off!"

And who was he, to undertake the high venture of friendship? He was an Ethiopian and a slave, himself in the dreadful dungeon of servitude. He knew well the weakness of the king, his master, and the power of court intrigue to ruin and to kill.

But "nothing venture, nothing have." That law of the lower gain surely holds true of the higher, of heroism as well as of commerce. Ebed-melech must have held up his head and walked proudly though a slave, as he went to the battlements to seek the king.

Had the emergency permitted, Ebed-melech would have selected any other place and time for his errand. Zedekiah was surrounded by his nobles and generals. He was at the principal point of attack, planning the repulse of the Babylonian army to which Jeremiah had counselled surrender. But the case allowed no delay. Friendship's time is always now.

And the result? What it is ever quite sure to be for all the Ebed-melechs and Esthers and Daniels and Davids and Calebs who stand out for the right, alone and against great odds. God has not left His world to Satan or to chance. "Take thirty men," said Zedekiah, "that the prophet's enemies may not prevent, and save him from his peril."

You may be sure that Ebed-melech made no delay,

and yet how thoughtfully he went to work in the rescue! He must have ropes, for the pit was deep; but he will also have soft cloths to wrap around the ropes, and save the worn flesh of the prophet. It is in recording such touches of tenderness that the Bible does most to win the hearts of men.

Thus Ebed-melech received a prophet in the name of a prophet (as a prophet), and thus he received a prophet's reward. Jeremiah, in the later estimate of the Jews, was their greatest prophet, greater even than Isaiah; and whatever from this time he was able to accomplish was due also to the slave Ebed-melech. Indeed, Jehovah gave Jeremiah a special message for the Ethiopian, that he should not perish in the siege; and that, not because he had saved Jeremiah, but for a more prophetic reason, "Because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith Jehovah."

This helping a prophet is therefore one of the easiest ways of multiplying and magnifying a life. It is like investing in a great invention in its early days and growing into affluence with it. We still have prophets, and often they are in the pit of discouragement sorely needing some Ebed-melech to help them out. Lower your ropes of gold and silver cord, well padded with greenbacks, and bring them up and set them to prophesying again! You may not be a prophet, but you may be a prophet's silent partner.

XXXII

THE WORLD BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS

THERE are famous pictures of Christ's temptation in the wilderness showing the devil with the traditional horns and hoofs and black bat wings; but surely the adversary was shrewder than that. He probably ap-

peared to Christ as he appears to us, in some celestial guise, and made his fiendish suggestions as an angel might.

Most of the time, I think, the devil left Him alone, to think over what he had said—alone with wild beasts to emphasize the absence of men, and with the great solitudes of earth and sky to sadden and oppress Him. Our Lord's other recorded temptation was when He was alone in the Garden. If we can come triumphantly out of our solitudes we can come safely out of any test.

Yet Christ was not alone at any time, for the Holy Spirit had brought Him there, and surely would not desert Him. His temptation was to forget this Spirit, to feel Himself alone, and to seek men—their approval, their following, their ways. That was the essence of temptation to Christ, as it is to us.

The Saviour was brought there to be tempted. A test is necessary before any decision. A decision is necessary before beginning any work. Till a man has met and conquered the temptation involved in his calling he cannot pursue his calling successfully. Christ's calling was to be man and yet God. His temptation was to merge God in man, to yield to the human impulses which were as strong in Him as in us, and to live for human ends, for the satisfaction of physical senses and worldly ambition.

With all of his devilish craft, Satan's appeal, while really a temptation to the human, the lower, was masked beneath a suggestion for the exhibition of the divine. "You are omnipotent," said Satan to the Lord. "Prove yourself God. Why go hungry when you can create food? or without followers and a kingdom when both will be yours for the exercise of your superhuman power? Why walk the way of the cross when you might as well head a triumphal procession? Why allow the Jews to scorn you and crucify you? Why not save them by the capture of their doubt, the miraculous overwhelm-

ing of their assent? Change stones to bread, and every Jew will want to crown you. Float from the Temple parapet in angels' arms, and the very priests will bow before their Messiah. Shall the Son of God wander homeless and hungry when world conquest is so easy, so certain?"

"Get thee behind me, Satan," came to Christ very quickly and easily later when Peter made the same suggestion. Our Lord had had much practice, here and afterwards. Nay, had not this been, so to speak, the temptation of Deity from the very creation of man, to force allegiance, to make men good in easy, ineffective ways, in ways that would have destroyed manhood? Were not our Lord's strong replies echoes from the age-long debates of the Trinity?

There is no picture of the entire Bible on which it is more salutary for modern men to gaze than this picture of Christ's temptation. It was just our modern temptation to do evil that good may come, or even to do not evil but the lesser good in the hope that the best may result. For us as for our Master there is only one resistance and conquest, the life that is not fed by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

XXXIII

JEREMIAH'S REAL-ESTATE TRANSACTION

WAS there ever a better illustration of faith and obedience than Jeremiah's purchase of that Anathoth field? The prophet was in prison, surrounded by implacable foes who would be likely to keep him there. Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonians, and was suffering terrible woes. Jehovah had told Jeremiah that the city would surely be captured by the powerful enemy.

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What that capture meant, of death or exile, no man of that age needed to be told.

And here, under these awful circumstances, comes the prophet's cousin, Hanameel. He owns a field three miles north of Jerusalem. Probably the enemy were at that moment encamped upon it. At any rate, it was entirely at their mercy. And this Hanameel coolly proposes that Jeremiah shall buy the field of him; nay, insists upon it as the prophet's duty, lest the field should go out of the family. Moreover, the same Jehovah who has been urging Jeremiah to proclaim the fall of Jerusalem, and the prophet had obeyed even to the extent of getting into prison thereby, now bids him buy the field. Surely if ever there was confusion of orders it is here.

But Jeremiah bought the field. He paid a good market price for it, too—ten dollars, which was fully equal to one hundred dollars to-day. And he had a deed made out and duly subscribed and witnessed by careful process of law, safely sealed and stored away in an earthen vessel, placed in the charge of the faithful Baruch.

Not in all history has there been so remarkable a real-estate transaction as this of Jeremiah's. The nearest approach to it is the auction and sale at Rome of the very ground on which Hannibal's besieging army was then encamped; but the purchaser in that case was not a prisoner, nor a prophet who had been prophesying Hannibal's success. Surely Jeremiah showed that "trust in God in the dark" which is the essence of faith.

Are you in the prison-house of fear and discouragement and doubt, surrounded by the turmoil of battle, the conflict of selfish, grasping, and cruel men? Buy your inheritance in the promises of God! There it lies, out of sight beyond the walls. Enemies are encamped upon it—all the fiends of hell. Yet pay the price for it—your heart's blood, your time and strength, your goods, your ambition, your trust. Seal the bond with public testimony, your name and voice and glad acknowledgment.

Lay it away in a golden jar; you will have use for it some day.

What matter the prison walls, now—the embattled foe, the chains, the obloquy, the cold and dark and hunger, the exile to come? Your inheritance is sure. There it lies in the sun, the laden fruit-trees gleaming, the flowers in the aisles between them, the breeze in their branches, and the protecting heaven bending over it all. The Ancient of Days has subscribed to the deed, and an attested copy is in the archives of heaven.

They say—I know not—that real estate is the best investment; that mines become exhausted, industrial enterprises get into poor hands, tariffs play havoc with values, railroad stocks fluctuate, panics may make a millionaire a pauper, but through all this rise and fall of wealth the land abides, and men must have it to base all their other values and wealth upon. The land is the ultimate value.

And “there’s a land that is fairer than day,” a “better country,” an “inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for you.” A messenger comes to every soul in his earthly prison and says, “Claim that land, buy it without money and without price, the deed signed and sealed in the blood of Calvary!” Jeremiah for your example, you will not refuse!

XXXIV

THE SPECTRUM OF SACRIFICE

AS the clear glass of a prism breaks up white light into its seven constituent colours, so the agony of the crucifixion and its attendant circumstances broke up into seven words of light the glory of the cross, and formed the spectrum of sacrifice. It is not altogether fanciful, and it certainly is pleasing and profitable, to

trace the likeness between these seven illuminating sentences and the seven beautiful colours that Christ the Creator had ages beforehand painted upon the storm.

The spectrum colours are violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. Certainly the violet, the royal colour, represents Christ's first word from the cross, the sentence wrenched from Him by that first awful agony when the cross was lifted, with His body nailed upon it, and then dropped, with a fearful tearing of muscles and nerves, into the earth socket prepared for it. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,"—no sentence of our Lord's may better wear the purple. Darkest of the colours, with the highest vibration of pain, it is the colour that carries the crown of love.

The saddest word from the cross, the ultimate word of suffering, is symbolized by indigo, the saddest of the colours. It is the cry torn from the Son by the Father's seeming desertion, that final crucifixion of the soul, that perfection of atonement for our sin: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Here is complete union with man's distress. Here is the uttermost that Satan could work upon our Redeemer. Here is the climax of the cross.

Blue, with its lessened vibration but still its nearness to the dark end of the spectrum, will represent the word of physical suffering, "I thirst." Not so intense as the word of spiritual suffering, yet it also proves Christ's entire union with our humanity. In that union is our hope, and blue is the colour of hope.

Next, green, the colour of new life; and that certainly is the hue for our Lord's word to the converted thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." It is the springtime colour. It means life from the dead. The word has revived the winter of millions of lives, hung foliage again upon their bare branches, and clothed with verdure their barren fields.

Yellow, the cheery sunshine colour, the golden colour

of wealth, is Christ's word to His mother, "Behold, thy son!" and to John, "Behold, thy mother!" Those sayings are a burst of light from the breaking clouds. The storm is nearly over. Love again and life again shall shine on earth, and sparkle in happy homes. It is indeed good to have filial love and mother-love thus consecrated by the cross.

Orange is the colour of fruitfulness. It represents our Lord's word of completion, "It is finished." The roots of this tree go back before the foundation of the world. Into the trunk and branches all centuries of humanity had built their lives. The flowers had been the swift blossoming of those three years. And now the orange fruit hung fair and round, for the healing and the feeding of the nations, the fruit of the Tree of Life.

Red is the colour of the blood. It is the flush of returning animation. The death of sin is past. The glow of restored communion with His Father flashes through the Saviour's veins. Warm scarlet is the hue of the final word from the cross, the word of the return, the ascension word of the soul, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

With that sentence the spectrum is completed; and when next we see, on Easter morning, the radiance of the Redeemer's face, it is again white light that dwells there, the analysis of pain all past, and the fulness of glory restored for evermore.

XXXV

THE LEFT-HANDED CHAMPION

IF a man is to fight for the right against oppression, it is well for him to be left-handed. This moral is to be found in one of the most graphic of the Bible stories, the account of Ehud, one of the judges of Israel.

Surely it was time for a judge to arise. For eighteen long years the land had groaned under the iniquities of Eglon, a fat-bodied tyrant of Moab. Fat folks are popularly supposed to be sluggish, which is just as likely not to be the case; at any rate, Eglon was capable of doing an immense amount of damage in eighteen years.

"But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer." That is the old-fashioned way of writing history; a beautiful, trusting, true way that will come into fashion again sometime, I hope.

This deliverer was Ehud, a Benjamite, a left-handed man who had made him a double-edged dagger half a yard long. Being left-handed, Ehud hung the dagger not on his left side, where most men carry their weapons, but on his right thigh under his loose robe, where it would thus be doubly concealed.

All the daggers in the world, however, would have been useless to Ehud without another puissant weapon which the young man possessed, to wit, courage. He had faith to believe that one man, going on God's errand, is an army. Indeed, he was so confident that he preferred to go alone; why should he share his glory with others that had not earned it?

The device of the present from the Israelites gave him ready access to the fat king of Moab, as he well knew it would. The device of withdrawing and marching off with those that had borne the gift made Eglon unsuspecting, as he knew it would. The device of dismissing his followers and returning alone to the palace removed whatever possibility of suspicion might remain, especially as Ehud's left side was so manifestly weaponless. Therefore when the Hebrew spoke of a secret errand, Eglon did not hesitate to send all his retainers and courtiers out of the audience room, and confront unguarded the avenger of the oppressed.

Then Ehud disclosed himself with one blazing sen-

tence: "*I have a message from God to you!*" And as the startled king sprang from his seat to summon his soldiers, the unsuspected left hand and the hidden dagger did their work right thoroughly, and Eglon was at the end of his cruelties.

Ehud coolly went forth, locking the doors behind him, and when the stupid attendants discovered the trick he was miles distant, speeding to bring down the victorious Hebrews on the leaderless Moabites. So Ehud became judge of Israel, and the land had rest for eighty years.

Many a time after Ehud's death the land had need of a left-handed deliverer, and the champion did not arise. Even to this day, and in our own land of the free, Ehuds are in great demand, and are seldom successfully called for. Men of resources. Men who hit out in unexpected ways against the devil and his works. Men who fashion and use novel weapons. Men who are not afraid to stand alone and fight alone in a holy cause. We have Eglons in plenty,—big, fat iniquities. Now for Ehuds, for left-handed heroes. Courage to their hearts and power to their hands.

XXXVI

WHEN PLOUGHSHARES BECAME SPEARS

THERE will be a time when men will beat their spears into ploughshares, and let all good men hasten that day of peace and brotherhood! There was a time when men beat their ploughshares into spears, and still that process is occasionally useful and necessary.

Shamgar lived in the old days before the kings in Israel, and was one of the judges. His name is a heathen name, as is that of his father before him. This fact, whatever it indicates of Shamgar's antecedents and personal belief, is more than a hint of the divine catholicity.

Ruth, a Moabitess, is an ancestor of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rahab, a Canaanite and a harlot at that, has a place in the hero-list of Hebrews with Abraham and Moses. There is no respect of persons with God, but very much respect of character and possibilities.

Shamgar lived in evil times for Israel. The proof of it is the absence of weapons of war. That is no hardship for us modern folks, since we have no use for weapons in the homes of the people, save for Fourth of July and the occasional burglar; and this use more honoured in the breach than the observance. We have our police and our regular army. We are fast getting ready to do without the latter.

But when Shamgar lived, every man had to be his own regular army and his own policeman. The Philistine oppressors, therefore, had no better way of reducing the Hebrews to absolute helplessness than by disarming the entire nation, and this they had done. Even in the days of Saul and Jonathan, those two leaders were the sole possessors of swords and spears, the Philistines allowing no smith to ply his trade throughout the land.

But a will finds a way to a weapon. A hero is never left helpless. The Greeks had their story of the gigantic rustic, Echelus, who smote down the Persians with his ploughshare. Samson slew a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass. And Shamgar killed six hundred of the Philistines with an ox-goad.

Really, the ox-goad made no despicable weapon. It was about eight feet long. On one end was an iron scraper with which to detach the earth from the plough. The other end was shod with a strong, sharp iron head with which to prod the unwilling oxen. With this we may easily believe a powerful and determined man might slay six hundred foes, especially if the feat was not accomplished in one battle but in a series of conflicts.

"And he also delivered Israel" is the close of the biography of Shamgar, which is one of those remarkable one-

verse biographies so common in our remarkable Bible—the book which manages to say more in a sentence than other books in a chapter. Of course Shamgar delivered Israel. One man of his spirit suffices to deliver any country from its most powerful enemies.

The Shamgars do not go around whining over their lack of means and opportunity, and bragging of what they would do if they only had the men and the money and the equipment. Each Shamgar organizes himself; he is the men. He pays himself, the wages of an honourable conscience. He arms himself, with pebbles from the brook near-by, if better weapons are lacking. His courage is infectious. His faith multiplies himself. He has no need to sound a trumpet: the people rally to his ox-goad.

Such are the men that will save our fair land from the Philistines of intemperance, lust, gambling, political and commercial dishonesty, and all infidelity. They will find weapons in every field. They will use their pens and their tongues. They will use Sunday-school lesson-leaves and public-school text-books. They will use newspaper columns and Uncle Sam's mail-bags and the ballot and the court and the church prayer meeting. They will temper every weapon in the flame of their fiery purpose, and with steady onset they will drive the Philistines into the sea. God send us the Shamgars, and help us to wield our goads!

XXXVII

THE MOST REMARKABLE OF ALL ACTED PARABLES

IT was in the early days of prophecy. Amos had gone from his sheep and his fig trees to the proud capital bringing goods such as had never been exposed in its marketplace. Micah was teaching fiery truths in the

south. The star of Isaiah was soon to arise. Hosea was one of this splendid galaxy of speakers of righteousness.

The world in which Hosea lived was in sore need of reform, and especially the northern kingdom. Under Jeroboam II, it had become prosperous and powerful beyond all the past and all that was to come. Its nobles were luxurious and proud. They oppressed the poor. There was no justice in the courts. There was heathenism on every hilltop. There was licentiousness in every valley. Israel, that had never risen so high, had never sunk so low. The iniquity that had moved the flaming rebuke of Amos and Micah, the iniquity against which Isaiah made his offer, "Here am I; send me," moved Hosea also with hot indignation and profound grief.

It is easy to be angry with evil; it is not so easy to be pitiful. John's "Little children, love one another" was more difficult than his summoning of fire from heaven. Our Lord's divinity shines forth more clearly in His tears over Jerusalem than in His whip of small cords; less in His "Woe unto you, Pharisees!" than in His "Father, forgive them!" Hosea was allied to mercy rather than judgment, and thus he is one of the greatest and noblest of the prophets.

It ought to be easier for us than for Hosea to imagine God's sorrow for human sin, since we know so much more of what God has done for the world. The long processes of creation antecedent to man, the infinite intricacy of the universe, the boundlessness of design, the endless evidence of loving thought, all this was quite unguessed by the Hebrews of old.

But a loving heart can understand love better than the shrewdest and best-furnished head; and such a heart was Hosea's. He had put himself, as it were, in the place of the Almighty. He has thought, "If these were my children who had thus transgressed, my children over whom I had brooded for many centuries, this sad result of all my eager planning and resourceful providences, what

despair, what unutterable sorrow would fill my soul!" Perhaps Hosea in his meditations anticipated the story of the prodigal son. Nay, he did even more, for that was a spoken parable, and Hosea acted a parable in his life—the parable of the prodigal wife.

The exact interpretation of Hosea's remarkable book is disputed by the scholars, but I think that this is the best understanding of it. The prophet had a wife, but she proved unfaithful to him. She left his home, and fell into the depths. Then came a word from the skies: "Go after this sinning woman, this ingrate, this traitor to all that is most beautiful and sweet; seek her out, though you find her in the foulest den; bring her to your pure home again, and take her to your inmost affections." And Hosea did so.

And then after this experience, which he came to understand as an experience divinely sent, the very commission for his ministry, Hosea began to preach. And what sermons they were! Some of the most effective sermons of the Bible are based upon harlots and adulterers, such as David's repentance concerning Bathsheba, the history of Rahab, the tale of Samson and Delilah, the account of the woman of Sychar, the woman who bathed Christ's feet with her tears, the woman regarding whom we have Christ's only recorded writing, that writing on the ground. On the background of the great darkness of these lives we see the clear shining of God's grace. And thus Hosea became a preacher of the grace of God. "If a father," he urged, "can freely restore a prodigal son and a husband a prodigal wife, how much more will the Creator of father-love and husband-love freely forgive the unhappy objects of His creation when they sin against Him!"

Ah, never set off the sternness of the Old Testament against the loving forgiveness of the New Testament! God—the ever-same God—is in all His Book!

XXXVIII

THE TEACHER THAT TURNED AWAY HIS PUPILS

FEW indeed have been the world's leaders that have given a cordial recognition to the leaders that were greater than they. They have not themselves been great enough to do this, especially when recognition of the greater leader meant of necessity a loss in their own prestige and following.

But John the Baptist was one of those few exceptional leaders. When he saw Jesus approaching, and declared solemnly to his own followers that Jesus was the Lamb of God, the long-expected Messiah, he knew well enough that his followers would leave him for the new teacher. He would have been ashamed of them if they had not done so. He would have been ashamed of himself if they had not done so, for it would have meant that he had wholly failed in his life work, that he had been preaching John the Baptist rather than Christ.

And yet it was by no means easy for John to take this step, I am sure. For many years I was secretary of a college faculty, and I know how hard it is even for college professors to advise the bright students away from their own classes. For many years I have worked in the Sunday school, and I know how difficult it is for the most consecrated teacher to let go of the best scholars that they may enter the class of some teacher that can do better by them. But John the Baptist did this hard thing.

He did it, though it meant loneliness, though he knew that the whole world would go after the new teacher. He did it, though it meant prison and forgetfulness for himself. He was glad and proud that Christ was to in-

crease, though it meant of necessity that he should decrease.

And John the Baptist did not speak under his breath, that few might hear him. Heralds must have loud voices, and he was the chosen herald of the Messiah. It was an ear-filling utterance, we may be certain, when the second Elijah made proclamation of the King.

Note, too, that the Baptist recognized, and would have all men recognize, the distinctive character of Christ. He did not summon men to the great miracle-worker, or the great teacher, or the great preacher and prophet. "Behold," he said, "the Lamb of God!" Christ was divine, and he was a sacrifice, and neither without the other. That is the one message of all that follow in the footsteps of John the Baptist.

"I knew Him not," said John, introducing the Messiah. That was the second difficult thing he did, to acknowledge his past blindness. This difficulty keeps many from confessing Christ,—the confession is an acknowledgment that they have been wrong.

"I have seen," said John. He had beheld the Holy Spirit from heaven, and he had heard the Spirit's testimony. John the Baptist had had an experience of his own. No man can bear witness to another man's experience, or be a herald upon another man's say-so.

And John the Baptist did the same thing the next day. A less sincere man would have satisfied his conscience with one proclamation, and would have kept his pupils. "There's the truth," most would have said; "take it or leave it." Not so John the Baptist; he fairly drove his pupils from him to Christ. That is another reason why he was chosen to be Christ's herald.

Thus it is, to-day as in the day of John, that true teachers pass on their pupils to other teachers that are able to carry them farther, and ministers yield their churches to other ministers that can preach the gospel more freshly, and friends introduce their friends to new

acquaintances that will fascinate them, and parents give up their children to enter Christ's service ten thousand miles away. And thus it is, to take the lesson from the other side, that you and I are called to leave friends and parents and ease and possessions, yes, and our John the Baptists, and enter with singleness of heart the one compelling allegiance of Jesus Christ. For He is the chiefest among ten thousand, and the One altogether lovely.

XXXIX

JEHU AND JONADAB TAKE A DRIVE
TOGETHER

SURELY no stranger couple ever sat in the same vehicle than Jehu the bloody king and Jonadab the saint. To be sure, Jonadab was rather rough for a saint, and Jehu was not an unmitigated fiend, but the contrast was as strong as it is likely to be in this mixed-up life of ours.

Jonadab, who has been called "the Prince of the Ascetics," was the son of Rechab, and the chief of a Kenite clan. Upon his half-wild Arab followers Jonadab had impressed his ideas of rugged righteousness and bold simplicity in a very remarkable way. They were bidden to be Nazirites and ascetics. They were to preserve their purity and strength by strict abstinence from all intoxicating liquor, by living wholly out of doors, in tents and not in houses, and by holding themselves altogether aloof from the luxurious temptation of vineyards, which they were not to own or even to plant. So masterful was Jonadab, and so firmly did he fix his principles in the lives of others—that severe test of real greatness—that many years afterwards, in the time of Jeremiah, when the prophet, for an object lesson of fidelity, brought

the entire Rechabite clan into the house of the Lord and tested them with wine, he found not one of them would touch it. Indeed, professed descendants and followers of Jonathan are living to this day in the recesses of Arabia and the region to the north.

Jehu, the mismatched occupant of the chariot on the strange ride of which I spoke, surely waded through slaughter to his throne. Life was nothing to him, the lives of thousands, men, women, and children, were nothing to him, if they stood in his way. That his way happened to coincide with the true progress and happiness of Israel was also, we feel, nothing to him and a mere accident. We feel that he is a butcher, even when he is killing a dragon or a snake. He was used to put down Baal, but as the Assyrians were later used, with all their cruelties and idolatry, as a stern weapon in the hands of the Lord. Samson slew the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, but jawbones have not therefore become the favorite weapons of heroes.

Jehu had just come from killing in cold blood forty-two young nobles who were travelling unsuspectingly and gayly to the capital. It was an assassin's deed, and even Jehu must have felt that it did him no credit. But driving on toward Samaria the murderer fell in with Jonadab, and at once saw a chance to ally himself with a most respectable element.

"Is thine heart right," says Jehu to the ascetic, "as my heart is with thy heart?"

"It is," Jonadab answered simply.

"If it be," urged Jehu, "give me thine hand," and he pulled the Bedouin saint up into the blood-stained chariot with him. "Come with me," said Jehu, "and see my zeal for the Lord."

I do not suppose that Jonadab was conscious of the incongruity. Those were savage days, and a few lives more or less, butchered in wantonness, made no difference to him, provided those were executed that should be. Jon-

adab was even ready to aid Jehu in his wholesale trapping and massacre of the followers of Baal, passing through that great templeful, and making sure that no weak-kneed or curious follower of Jehovah had strayed in among them. Yes, Jonadab made himself, we may believe, greatly useful to Jehu.

All the more because of that is it a sad picture, this of Jonadab and Jehu riding side by side in the same chariot. Ahead of them, to be sure, were the Lord's enemies to be slain; but behind them were many slain who were not the Lord's enemies. Evil, much evil, was assented to, in order that good might be done. Jonadab was not needed up there beside Jehu. Jonadab is always out of place in Jehu's chariot.

It is ever a severe temptation to Jonadab to sit there, to ride into Samaria beside Jehu. Jehu is forcible. He is doing things that urgently need doing. It is only his way of doing them that cries to heaven. It is a sore temptation that he offers when he invites the Lord's men up into the chariot with him. And not yet, after all these centuries, have all the Jonadabs learned to refuse.

XL

THE GRADUAL MIRACLE

WHEN our Lord healed the woman with a hemorrhage, "*straightway* the fountain of her blood was dried up." When He took by the hand Jāirus's dead daughter, "*straightway* the damsel rose up." When He commanded the Capernaum paralytic to arise, "*immediately* he rose up before them." When He touched the leper, "*straightway* the leprosy departed from him." When he spoke to the sick man at the Pool of Bethesda, "*straightway* the man was made whole."

Indeed, "straightway" may almost be said to be the word of Christ's miracles, as if the Saviour were so impatient with sorrow and suffering, so eager to bless, that he allowed no instant's delay.

We are surprised, then, when we hear of a gradual miracle. It is almost alone, perhaps it is entirely alone, among Christ's wonderful works.

It is the blind man of Bethsaida. He has friends; at least there were some that brought the man to Jesus, but Jesus did not work the miracle in their presence. Perhaps it was more curiosity than friendship that led them to bring the man to Christ.

Our Lord took the blind man by the hand, and tenderly led him out of the gaping crowd, out of the staring village, far out into the fields,—out, I think, till He had shaken off the last persistent follower. Perhaps there was some unexplained difficulty about the miracle. Perhaps the man's faith was feeble. Perhaps that is why he was led away from the village.

But oh, to have heard what Jesus said to him on the way into the fields!—the loving sympathy with his misfortune, the feeding of his hope and confidence, the probing of his purity, the clear-toned call to nobility! That talk along the way must have gone far toward opening the blind man's eyes.

The first stage of the miracle was for the blind man a glorious triumph. "I see men! I see men!" What if they did look like walking trees, slurred and portentous? The blessed light had come again to his long darkness. Forms had once more burst into his formless world, and distinctions were born in his monotony.

It was a blessed change, as it is when upon the sin-blinded soul dawns any vision of God, however indistinct and grotesque. Any seeing is better than no sight. If only so much light as to prevent one's running into a door or a wall or another man, we praise God for it with

all our hearts. Verily, a blessed thing it is to behold the sun.

But no partial miracle contents Christ. He who made the eye will not rest till its vision is perfect. Again the healing touch, again the staring, delighted outlook on the world, and this time the blind man was fully restored, "and I saw all things clearly."

That is what will come to us if we "follow on to know the Lord." Now we see as in a mirror, indistinctly; by and by we shall see face to face. Upon some the vision of spiritual things flashes suddenly and fully; for most souls it is a gradual miracle. But what care we whether it is sudden or gradual, if only at last we see Him as He is, and in the clarity of that vision see all truths as they are?

XLI

BEARS AS GOD'S AVENGERS

ONE of the Bible passages that infidels criticise most hotly is the story of the killing of the forty-two Bethel children by two bears because the children had insulted the young prophet Elisha. "How cruel!" cry the critics; "how disproportioned the penalty to the offence! What a bloody, unjust book is the Bible!"

But the criticism results from misapprehension. For, in the first place, we must remember that the episode was at the very beginning of Elisha's career. He was in a difficult position as a young man succeeding an old man, a pupil succeeding a teacher, a man with little or no reputation taking up the work of the acknowledged leader of the nation. In such a case the first moments tell on all succeeding days. If Elisha had allowed ridicule and contempt at the start, his life work would have been ruined.

In the second place, we must remember that it was not a horde of infants that insulted Elisha, but of boys old enough to know better, and perhaps even of young men. The word translated "children" is applied to Joseph at the time when he interpreted Pharaoh's dream, to Solomon when he was twenty years old, to Joshua when he was Moses' chief assistant, and to Jeremiah when, in his young manhood, he was called to be a prophet. Besides, the boys were doubtless reflecting the common sentiment, and were backed up by the opinion of all Bethel.

In the third place, the cry, "Thou bald head," was peculiarly offensive, since the Orientals regard baldness as a disgrace. It is not likely that Elisha, being a young man, was actually bald. The term was equivalent to "Thou uncleanness, thou leper!" If he was bald, the present writer, being bald himself, has double sympathy with the prophet!

In the fourth place, the cry of the boys was a direct insult to Elisha as a prophet, and to the God whom he represented. "Go up," the meaning is, "as you lyingly say Elijah went up; and the sooner we are rid of you, the better!"

In the fifth place, it is not said that the bears killed the lads, but only that they "tore" them. They would be sufficiently punished by the rending of their clothes and their flesh.

In the sixth place, the opportune intervention of the two bears is proof that God was on the side of Elisha, and in criticising the event we are criticising God.

In the seventh place, if the happening had not commended itself to the common conscience as just,—and consciences then were much as they are now,—Elisha's influence would have been ruined; but he seems to have been more beloved and honoured than the sterner Elijah, and the general impression we gain from the other details of his life is of a kind, mild-mannered man, all of

whose miracles were deeds of helpfulness, mainly concerned with such small matters as a lost axe-head, an unhealthful spring, and poisoned pottage.

Finally, considered from any view-point, the incident was a powerful rebuke of irreverence. It must have sent awe through Bethel and all Israel. The entire nation became more thoughtful and serious because of those bears and the punishment of those rude children.

Shall the lesson stop with the days of Elisha? It is surely needed now, if ever. With our new feeling of liberty, our new regard for children, the new freedom and naturalness of family life, the father's absorption in business and the mother's devotion to her clubs, children are allowed in the home, church, Sunday school, and on the street a familiarity and independence of manner that would have shocked our grandfathers beyond measure. To their elders also the minister is no longer the great man of the village, and the church is no longer a place for reverence, and the Bible is tumbled about like any other book. On every hand we hear the cry, "Go up, thou bald head!"

Bears are in the woods,—two mighty bears! Irreverence leads to two great evils, infidelity and despair, "without hope and without God." Those bears tear not our clothes and our flesh but our very souls.

Ah, let us cover our mouths and those of our children. Let us learn to remove our shoes in the holy place and to bend our stubborn backbones. Let us get that fear of the Lord which is at least the beginning of the love of the Lord, and the initial point of all wisdom.

XLII

OUR LORD BUILDING A CHURCH

IT is not surprising that Jesus wished to know who men thought Him to be. That is an important matter in any one's life. It made a great difference to Napoleon whether men thought of him as first consul or as an emperor. It made a great difference to Edison whether men thought of him as a telegraph operator or as an inventor. It made a vast difference to Jesus whether men thought of Him as the son of Joseph or the Son of God. It made a difference to Him because it made an infinite difference to men.

Christ's church consists of all those that think Him to be the Son of God. The Greek word for "church" means "the called-out." Christ's church consists of those that are called out from the persons that believe Jesus to be a sage, a prophet, a hero, a martyr; and the called-out persons believe Him to be God.

It is Christ that calls out, that selects the stones for His church. He alone can tell whether the belief in Him as God is merely an empty belief of the head, or a heart-and-life belief also. He alone can see through the stone, cut trimly, with shining, smooth surfaces, and discern the hidden fissure that will crack or the hidden pyrite that will stain.

And, of course, the first stone that Christ selected, the first church-member that He called out, was the first man who sincerely and openly believed Him to be God. That it was Peter need not surprise us, for that apostle's faults were all on the surface and could be trimmed away. The inner part of him was all right, and it is the inner part of a stone rather than the outside that counts permanently in a building.

Was Peter surprised at this honour from his Lord? I think not; he would have been far more surprised if it had not been given, if after his whole-hearted adhesion he had not been built into the church of Christ. And indeed the whole gospel story proves that he received no special honour, no more than John, no more than James, no more than Paul, no more than you or I if we make Peter's confession of Christ.

But were not the keys of the kingdom of heaven given to Peter? Were not his bindings and loosings to be ratified in heaven? Yes, and all this authority is ours also, on the same terms. When stones are built into a church, the same key that admits to the block of marble or lapis lazuli admits to the block of granite or limestone. Those that are one with Christ are one with His learning and authority and power. Not the humblest child of the church but may lift his head with the lordliest.

"The gates of Hades shall not prevail against *it*," said Christ; against the church; against you, if you are a stone built into the church. But was not Christ, the next minute, to say sternly to Peter, "Get thee behind me, *Satan?*" Was not Peter, not many months thereafter, to deny Christ and go out weeping bitterly? Yes; but not into the outer darkness. The power of Hades may shake the church, but the mortar holds. No stone that has been built into the structure shall ever fall out.

XLIII

THE FATAL LOOK

IT was very natural for Lot's wife to look back. Some happenings draw the eye almost irresistibly. One is a fight. Another is a moving railway train. Another is a fire. Mere curiosity, mere desire to see the heavens

full of smoke and fire, the falling flames and the rising flames, would account for the tarrying of Lot's wife, and her backward gaze.

Besides, Sodom was her home. There were her neighbours and friends and relatives. Buildings were falling upon them. The fire was consuming them. The ground was opening to swallow them up. Could she refrain from gazing upon that awful funeral pyre?

As she turned around, every item in the terrible landscape was familiar to her. She saw the swaying of a house in which she was wont to visit. It toppled into a crumpled mass. She saw a tower of flames shoot suddenly into the blackness, and knew that the marketplace of Sodom was there, and the storehouse of Lot's wealth. All these common scenes were horribly transformed, but she must stay and gaze, fascinated.

To be sure, there were overpowering reasons why she should look straight before her, and hasten on. She could not have doubted the supernatural character of her guests of the night before. They had foretold the disaster, and their prophecy was now marvellously fulfilled. She knew that she should obey them, and flee from the doomed city. Besides, her husband and her daughters were ahead of her, and both affection and duty called her on. Very likely, too, her conscience had warned her of Sodom's abominations, and she knew that it was more than disaster, it was sin, from which she was to flee. All this was known by Lot's wife, and yet she stopped and looked back, gazing at Sodom.

How the miserable woman became a pillar of salt we are not told, but the probability is that she was caught and smothered in a downfall of volcanic ashes, which afterward hardened and eroded into a rude column, perhaps offering some resemblance to a woman's form. At any rate, however formed, that pillar has been ever since one of the spiritual monuments of the world.

It stands by the highway of life, and no bronze tablet

is needed to relate its origin or point its moral. It indicates relative values. "First things first," it says. "Seek first the kingdom of heaven," it pleads. "When your hand is laid to the plough, look not back," it urges. It insists on the folly of leaving one's first love, of turning again to the beggarly elements of this world, the fleshpots, melons, and garlic of Egypt. It bids every pilgrim flee, as Christian fled from the City of Destruction, his fingers in his ears, crying "Life! Life! Eternal life!"

It is amusing to look back — for a minute; and then it ceases to be amusing. The view forward is harsh, nothing but bare rocks and forbidding peaks; but safety is there, and righteousness is there, and God. It is natural to stop, and natural to look back; but it is fatal.

XLIV

CHRIST'S MOST MARVELLOUS MIRACLE

IN one way of looking at it, the greatest of Christ's miracles was not the healing of any disease, however severe, since the sick men had intelligence to which our Lord could appeal; nor was it even the raising of the dead, since there were departed spirits that could be summoned to reinhabit their oldtime tenements. The most wonderful of the miracles, as I think, were those that swayed inanimate creation, those that mastered the winds and the waves, when He stilled the storm and when He walked on the water.

The walking on the water was a greater marvel than even the swaying of the vast air currents of the world, since it was a commanding of gravity, a force beyond the world, a force that some hold to be the central resultant of all forces, the power that unites all the planets

and stars of the universe. Gravity is still, after all these centuries of thought and investigation, the one deepest mystery of nature; yet Christ was as easily master of it as of the clay on which He walked or the couch on which He lay down.

It is interesting to note that all of the three wrong things that Christ was tempted to do in the wilderness He did later when they were right, when no tempting of God or yielding to Satan was involved. He did not make bread from stones for Himself, but He made bread from practically nothing for nine thousand persons. He did not do homage to Satan to win all the kingdoms of the world, but He won them by way of the cross: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself." And He did not defy gravitation for the sake of men's applause, throwing Himself from the parapet of the Temple, but He defied gravitation none the less, walking alone at night over the abysses of the sea. It is thus with many of the devil's temptations: they are evil only while he is associated with them.

How little faith man has in the unknown! As soon as he is brought near the unheard-of and the unfamiliar his hair begins to rise on end. Instead of taking it for granted that God is in the unknown, and that therefore it is friendly, kind, and helpful, he sees in the unknown a horrible spectre, and screams in terror. If John or Peter had seen a flying-machine darting across from Gaddara to Bethsaida, they would have had the same fear. So should we, a few years ago. If they had seen a steamboat ploughing its way from Bethsaida to Capernaum, they would have been equally frightened, as we should have been a few decades ago. Who knows what mysteries that now cause our flesh to creep will by next year become commonplaces in our lives?

Indeed, was not the air, perhaps, as familiar to Christ as the water? Who knows? On those nights which He spent by Himself in prayer among the hills may He not

often have mounted to the skies, and thus have withdrawn Himself literally from the frets of earth into the serenity of heaven? Do you think that the possession of such a power would have separated Him from us? No more than walking on the sea. And we may do both some day; both may be among the "greater things" that are reserved for Christ's disciples. Why limit the subduing of nature to which God commands us? If Peter could walk on the waves, by faith, and as long as his faith endured, may not we also?

And truly, though it may not be our duty or our privilege to walk out on this mystery, there is no reason why we should not ask Christ's permission to walk out toward Him in this or any other domain of the unknown; and if He says "Come," let us not deserve the rebuke He gave to Peter, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" To us the tossing waves of all the unknown shall be as a level floor, if Christ bids us come to Him upon the waters.

XLV

CHRIST PLACES HIS SEAL UPON PLEASURE

WHY was it John alone of the four evangelists that gave us an account of Christ's first miracle, the turning of water into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee? It was only a merrymaking: it was no life-or-death matter, no raging tempest stilled, no broken tomb, no vast throng satisfied with bread from heaven. Perhaps in their unconscious thought Matthew and Mark and Luke may have feared that the recital might lower the dignity of their great theme; at any rate they evidently thought the matter to be unimportant. But John saw its importance. To his loving soul all the be-

ginnings of his Lord's work were to be cherished, and certainly His beginning of miracles. To His wise heart there was a meaning in this particular miracle that was hidden from less thoughtful observers.

This is one of the most debated passages in the New Testament. First, what are we to understand regarding Christ's words to His mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." Surely that it was not spoken in harshness, but in love. "Woman" is no more than our "Lady," and should be so rendered. A rebuke is implied, certainly; perhaps she had been too officious in some way that John, to whom Christ had bequeathed her upon the cross, hesitated to write down. But that it was gentle rebuke, and an accepted rebuke, is made sure by Mary's words to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

In the second place, what are we temperance folks to make of this manufacture of wine by our Lord? Are we to be wise above what is written, and boldly assert that the wine was non-intoxicating? For one thing, we are to remember that the saloon question, as we have it, was not a question of Christ's day, and that the wine of the peasants of Palestine was very different from our fiery whiskey and brandy and rum. But I think also that a special and blessed meaning is hidden in those words of the governor of the feast, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." It was no ordinary wine that Christ made, none of our evil ferments and distillations. It was nectar of the angels. It was the essence of nature's pure and masterful life. No one of us but would hold out an eager cup for wine of the Lord's making!

In the third place, what are we to say regarding the enormous quantity of wine that would seem to have been made,—106 to 162 gallons of it? Surely that it only shows the generous and overflowing nature of our Christ. It overflowed in healing, as the woman found

who touched the hem of His garment. It weighted the net with fish to the breaking-point. It left basketsful over and above when the thousands were fed. It may well have left many gallons of wine as a present for the wedded pair.

And so, brushing all this criticism aside, what are we to see in this miracle?

We are to see Christ's sanction of marriage. That event is indeed "the beginning of miracles" in the lives of most of us, and it would be sad if we had to leave Christ out of it. But He was no patron saint of celibates. How He loved little children! How He rejoiced in pure family life! How sure we may be that He is present at every upright marriage altar!

And especially, as the marriage is barely mentioned, we are to see in this miracle Christ's sanction of festivity. Ascetics as well as celibates get no comfort from this scene. Christ was a man of sorrows, but also of joys. How I wish that some artist would give us a picture of Christ laughing! For of course He laughed; and what a laugh it must have been,—the very soul of merriment! If ever we are tempted to the sad impiety of summoning Christ to our sorrows but leaving Him out of our pleasures, let us bethink ourselves of the Cana festival, and remember that it, and not a funeral, awoke the power of miracle within our Lord.

XLVI

DICE AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

I LIKE to notice what it is that John tells us and that the other evangelists omit. These things are usually good indications of what the deepest love for Jesus will remember, and brood over.

For instance, in the four accounts of the crucifixion it is very significant that John alone dwells upon the parting of Christ's garments, though all four mention the incident. But Matthew, Mark, and Luke give to it only a passing thought and a rapid clause. John tells us all about it: how there were four soldiers set to guard the cross; and how they took up the sacred garments, very likely handling them roughly and making rude jests upon them; and how they cut and slashed into the larger outer garments till they had four sad pieces, one for each of them; and how when they came to the inner garment, the shirt, they found that, unlike the ordinary, it was not made in two pieces but was woven all around in one piece without a seam, like the seamless garment worn by the high priest; and how they said, "That's too good to spoil by tearing; let's shake the dice for it"; and how one soldier, perhaps, took off his helmet that the dice might be shaken in it; and how all this had been foretold in one of the Psalms a thousand years before,—that part of the Messiah's garments should be torn in pieces for division among His slayers, and part should be assigned by lot; all this did John notice, and remember, and set down.

And no wonder. For how many, many times His fingers had touched reverently that priceless outer robe. How many times he had known that strength passed from it into his body as into that of the woman who touched Him in the throng at Capernaum. How many times, when the outer robe was laid aside, in the heat of the day, or on their long journeys together, the beloved disciple had observed the exceptional form and fineness of the inner garment, and had thought, "He is a high priest indeed; what if He is to be also the sacrifice?" And how dear to John was every thread of that raiment! How he longed to gather it all in his arms, and take it home, and preserve it forever! And now to see it treated thus——!

Ah, my reader! have you not often felt that still, reaching up, up, up from the darkness of this world into the unseen heavens, rises the Cross of Christ? It is our human prayer, and it is God's answering promise. It is the awfulness of sin, and it is the blessedness of salvation. It is the new and surer Jacob's stairway, and it makes every spot on earth a Bethel, a house of God.

And have you not often, feeling this, shrunk back from the bargaining and the selling, the pushing and hustling, the greed and grasping, the selfishness and covetousness and envy and hate?

What is it, what is it all but a shaking of dice at the foot of the Cross?

Oh, when will men learn to walk softly, to take the shoes from their feet, to be humble before their God!

XLVII

STEADY TRUTH FROM AN UNSTEADY PULPIT

JOSEPH PARKER'S pulpit joined on to the rest of the church so that it merged in it. The gallery stairs, even, rose directly from the pulpit and were often crammed with eager listeners. When there is a great empty space between the minister and the audience, a chasm of gaping benches, it is because there is a great emptiness in the preaching. It may be too much of the head and too little of the heart, or it may be too much of the emotion and too little of the intellect; but it is quite certain, in either case, to contain too little of Jesus Christ. For where He is lifted up, in a modern sermon as on the Roman cross, He is sure to draw men to Himself.

When Joseph Warren gave the address in the Old

South Church, Boston, on the second anniversary of the Boston Massacre, the church was so full that the orator could reach the pulpit only by climbing in through the high window back of it. Every minister would be willing to be forced into similar exercise. Well, Christ shows the way into that experience.

On the day when Christ was compelled by the thronging audience to make a boat His pulpit, He was preaching out of doors. Out-door preaching means big audiences. A man who could not get three people to follow him into a room can get thirty people to listen to him on Boston Common. Go where people are, and they will say, "At least, that man means business; he is after us; we'll see what he wants with us."

Going out where the people are means also a varied and wonderfully enriched ministry. It is tremendously suggestive. People are doing all sorts of things, if you go where they are. Themes and illustrations by the score are pressed upon you as soon as you begin to talk. No need of a library out of which to dig them; every life is a book; every tree is a text; every flower is a commentary.

The pulpit, to be sure, is unsteady, when you begin to talk for Christ outside the church; it is as unsteady as the moving waters of the Sea of Galilee beneath Jesus when He preached from the boat. The indoor pulpit is wooden, but it is solid. The walls confine you, but they are of substantial stone. The indoor preacher is in familiar and easy surroundings; he is not troubled by the flashing out of troublesome questions and bold interruptions, by the desperate onslaught of human misery, by the beating storm of human passions. It is far more comfortable preaching in a synagogue.

Ah, but the waves underneath Christ's boat pulpit were living water! The turmoil that beat in upon His ministry was the turmoil of life. That was what He was for, that is what every Christian is for, to get close to

human life. And to Christ, as to every Christian, the waves of our troubled human life are as a solid pavement, because underneath are the everlasting arms.

XLVIII

WHEN THE ALTAR WAS NOT A REFUGE

WHEN Joab, the warrior, entered the Tabernacle court and laid hold of two of the four horns or corner projections of the altar of burnt offerings, he had found the place of all places that was safest for him. And yet it was not safe.

Joab was David's nephew, and for many years he had been true to the great king; only, he was true to the worst side of David, and not to the best side, and so he was not true to David at all.

To be sure, he had fought on David's side against Saul, and David had made him commander-in-chief; but Joab chose to follow his own judgment rather than his king's, and that is treason.

In the first place, Joab slew Abner, the mighty warrior, whom David was moved by the wisest motives to preserve, and whom the king mourned as "a prince and a great man."

In the second place, Joab slew Absalom, and by that murder almost broke the father's heart.

In the third place, Joab slew Amasa, as he was in the act of kissing him, and thus became the Judas of the Old Testament.

In the fourth place, worst of all, he pandered to David's lust by placing Uriah where he must be killed in the battle, that David might marry his wife, Bathsheba.

As a final treachery to David, defying his royal master's will that Solomon should succeed him, Joab

joined David's oldest son, Adonijah, the second Absalom, in his plots for the succession; and when those were foiled, Joab, the mighty general, had nothing left but to flee for his life to the house of God.

The four "horns of the altar" received the blood of the sacrifices, and in a special way summed up the sanctity of the altar itself. From of old, panting fugitives had laid hold upon them, and gained that protection from merited punishment which the altar and its sacrifices gloriously symbolized. Joab seized upon his last hope when he grasped in his despair the horns of the altar.

But wilful murderers, by an express provision of the sacred law, were forbidden even this final sanctuary; and Joab was a wilful murderer, trebly dyed. Solomon was acting legally, as well as wisely for his kingdom, when he sent Benaiah, who slew him.

There is an unpardonable sin!—that is the lesson taught by the Joabs. There is a filthiness that must remain "filthy still," that even the blood of the Lamb cannot wash away. There is a laying hold even of the horns of God's altar that does not avail, because the hands alone lay hold, and not the heart.

No one has committed the unpardonable sin if he dreads sin and longs after holiness; those that brood over this teaching are least of all those that need it. The sin against which the altar of God's mercy is closed is the sin that, through years of acquiescence in it, has closed the heart against God's mercy and made holiness no longer desired. The Joabs fall by inches, till at last they fall even from the horns of the altar.

XLIX

WHEN A SHADOW WAS WITHDRAWN

IN one of Hawthorne's weird stories he pictures a man who could not cast a shadow, and the wonderment he caused when he walked forth on a sunny day. No less strange is the Bible story of the shadow that went backward.

It was a reversed shadow, to confirm a reversed prophecy. Isaiah had told the sick king Hezekiah to prepare for death. Then the godly king wept bitterly and prayed eagerly for life, his face turned to the wall on his bed; and God heard his cry.

Why that prayer for an extension of life was answered and so many others have remained unanswered no one can guess. Only He who searches men's hearts and is acquainted with all their lives can tell when it is best for men to die; and when, hearts being changed or conditions being changed, it is best for men to keep on living a while longer. There is nothing for a child of God to do but ask his Father earnestly for longer life, if he wants it, and then willingly take Death's hand if the Father sends His dark messenger after him.

And why is it that the answer to that prayer was so plainly and promptly manifested, while the answers to most other prayers are left often for months in cloudy suspense? No man knows that, either. Isaiah had not crossed the city, going away from the palace, before God's message was clearly sounded in his soul, bidding him return and assure Hezekiah that he should live. And then that marvellous sign was given, the recession of the shadow ten spaces on the curious step-dial that King Ahaz had brought to Jerusalem from foreign parts. In addition, there was the fig-poultice laid on the boil and the disappearance of the ulcer; but the withdrawal of the shadow

ow, perhaps for as far as it had advanced all day, was a token that the ulcer would not return, and that the cure was deeper than the surface.

How the miracle was performed — whether, as some think, by the downward bending of the sun's rays into the shadow by a peculiarly refracting atmosphere (the wise men have it all figured out), or whether it was altogether a break in the course of nature — makes no difference in the lesson we are to learn, which is this: that it is as easy for God to remove shadows as to allow them to lengthen, and no more difficult for Him to erase the shadow from a life than from a dial. If our life is in shadow it is because we have not Hezekiah's faith and earnestness, or it is because the shadow, after all, is best for us.

For shadow has its blessed uses as well as the sunlight. Out of the shadow comes rain upon the parched earth, and verdure to the gray fields, and beauty to the flowers, and fruit to the trees. Out of the shadows, too, come strength and wisdom and beauty and fruitfulness to our human lives. Well may we rest content in the shadow, if God will not have it withdrawn.

L

A DOUBTED BIT OF DOUBTLESS BIBLE

IN the New Testament harmony that lies before me as I write, the story of the woman taken in adultery is printed in fine type, the rest of the harmony appearing in type several sizes larger. The reason is that this passage in John's Gospel is omitted from most of the ancient manuscripts, while those manuscripts that do contain it differ much from one another. It is a piece of doubted Bible within the Bible; and no other bit, among all that

the destructive critics have doubted, is so distinguished by typographical opprobrium.

The reason lies deeper than manuscripts; it lies in the seeming excuse for adultery that men have found, or imagined that they found, in Christ's words, "Neither do I condemn thee." The hard hearts of men, far more than the destructive critics, have condemned the passage.

And yet to any loving follower of our Lord, such as John, the very essence of the Bible, the very heart of Christianity, lies in that scene.

It is a graphic word painting; John was picturing what he had witnessed: the triumphant scribes and Pharisees, winking at one another in their exultation, for they had a trap at last into which this pretended Messiah would assuredly fall; the poor woman, her head bowed in shame and sorrow; the curious crowd of gazers and whisperers; and then the cruel question: "Moses commanded us to stone such creatures as this; then what do *you* say of her and her sin?"

Christ will say nothing. As later before His judges, so now before these plotting enemies, He will be discreetly silent.

But what is He doing? He is bending over, and writing with His finger on the ground. It was our Lord's only piece of writing, so far as we know.

And what was He writing? As the scribes and Pharisees stole up behind Him one by one and curiously looked over His shoulder, what did they see? It has well been conjectured that each saw *his own secret sin* written by that stern finger on the ground. No wonder that they slunk out one after the other. No wonder that, after a few minutes of this merciless, quiet soul-dissection, Christ could look up and find Himself alone with the sinner. And the whole gospel finds summary in the blessed words, "Did no man condemn thee? Neither do I condemn thee. Go thy way; from henceforth sin no more."

Those that think some sinners are to be forgiven by men, but other sinners, however penitent, may not safely or wisely be forgiven, join with those that deny the authenticity of this story. They disobey Christ's command, "Judge not." They dare not pray the Lord's Prayer; its petition for forgiveness as they have forgiven would be a curse on their own heads. There is a sin that God cannot pardon, but there is no sin that man dare refuse to forgive.

LI

THE HAND THAT COULD NOT BE PULLED BACK

IT was Jeroboam's hand.

That hand had had a remarkable history. It had held the ten symbolic pieces of Ahijah's new garment, rent to represent the rending of the kingdom. It had been "lifted up against the king," against Solomon. It had clinched itself in Egypt, wasting away in exile until Solomon's death. It had returned to thrust the people's righteous demands in the face of the young king, Rehoboam. It had seized a spear and led the ten tribes in the revolt which founded a new kingdom in the north. It had set up calf idols in Bethel and Dan, and abominable sanctuaries on every high hill. It should have been the earthly hand of the Lord, who had placed the sceptre in its grasp; instead, it became the instrument of the evil one.

Finally, in defiance of God's explicit commands, this hand of Jeroboam dared to offer incense on the idolatrous altar it had set up, and then, when a man of God cried out in rebuke of the profane deed, this hand was stretched out against him, with the order to the fierce soldiers standing near, "Lay hold on him!" "And,"

says the solemn Bible record, "His hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not draw it back again to him."

No wonder that Jeroboam was filled with dismay. A king with a withered hand, a stiff arm, would be a poor sort of king in those days of personal leadership. No wonder that with all his heart he besought the man of God to intercede for him to Jehovah. The wonder is that the outraged prophet consented, and that the outraged Deity granted the petition.

Two withered hands, one in the Old Testament and one in the New, and more than a thousand years—a whole eternity—between them! Jeroboam's hand withered because in disobedience and pride it was stretched out against God and God's minister. The man of the withered hand in the New Testament cured because in humility and prompt obedience he stretched out his hand at the command of the Son of God. The one is a symbol of the world before Christ came. The other is a symbol of the world that Christ made possible.

But still, as in the day of Jeroboam, hands are withered that are stretched out against the Almighty. God alone, who formed our members and all our powers, can preserve them in pliancy and strength. Defy God in the use of any ability, and that ability will speedily shrink and stiffen and die.

And, on the other hand, there is no faculty, however clumsy and awkward and unformed, but is filled immediately with life and skill when it is stretched forth for God. Do your best in His happy service, your best though it is relatively poor, and He will lift it up into the absolute best. There are none but beautiful hands, strong hands, skilful hands, among His children.

LII

A MISUNDERSTANDING NEAR TO MISCHIEF

MISUNDERSTANDINGS rank very close to sins as destroyers of the happiness of men. They part best friends. They multiply sects. They split nations in civil war. Any recital that will put us into right relations to misunderstandings is of great value, and such is the story of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh in their dealings with their brother tribes of Israel.

To these two and a half tribes was assigned land on the east of the Jordan; but, until the Canaanites had been conquered, they were to remain with the main body of the Hebrews and fight the common battles. After Canaan had been won, or practically all won, they were allowed to withdraw to Gilead and the rest of the east-of-Jordan country. It was a fine example of co-operation for the common good.

But hardly had this been accomplished before the nine and a half tribes on the west of the Jordan began to hear strange things and most disquieting rumors. Their brethren were setting up their own religion! They had built their own altar, and "a great altar to see, too." They evidently did not intend to join the rest of the nation in the common worship that was to keep the twelve tribes a united nation. As that worship was ordained by Jehovah, these east-Jordan tribes were plainly in rank revolt against Jehovah as well as in manifest disloyalty to their brethren.

Only recently this altar has been discovered. On the high peak known as Kurn Surtabeh, about twenty miles north of Jericho, a precipitous bluff juts out into the

Jordan valley. On its summit is a huge piece of masonry, with traces of fire upon it. The tradition is that it has been used for a beacon, and the people of the district still call it by the Bible name of Ed, or 'Ayd. It is one of the most valuable monuments in all Palestine.

How easy it would have been to make this incident, in those hot-headed times, the cause of a civil war! Doubtless some there were that urged it. They said, "We have no time to lose. We must move against those renegades at once, and take them by surprise when they are not looking for us. We must stamp out this deadly heresy immediately, before it gains further headway." They doubtless justified their proposals by many grounds of bravery, determination, and patriotism.

But instead the Israelites did the only right thing. They chose representative men, men of authority, and sent them promptly east of the Jordan, to talk the matter over, face to face with the Reubenites and Gadites and half tribe of Manasseh. The world would be saved a vast amount of trouble if this were the rule regarding difficulties among individuals, churches, denominations, parties, and nations. The best lawyers settle suits out of court. So do the best Christians.

And how easy and quick was the solution! It always is, when brothers really try to come together. There was really "nothing in it" all. The very suggestion of a separate worship was received with horror by the east-Jordan people. It was to prevent the possibility of such a thing that the altar had been erected. It was not an altar of sacrifice, but a monument of witness. It was to say mutely to their children and to all visitors, "This people, though parted geographically from their brothers on the west of the river, is of one religion with them, celebrating the same sacred rites and worshipping the same mighty God in the same holy place." The supposed altar of discord became instantly a memorial of concord. The supposed seat of irreligion or at least of

heresy and schism had been gloriously discovered to be a beacon of brotherhood.

And so will it be with all our quarrels if we will only adopt the frank method of the west-Jordan Hebrews. Every boundary fence will then become a bond, every misunderstanding a new betrothal. Let every man count it a glory to be the first to approach his brother at the very hint of any disunion.

LIII

THE MAN WITH A DRAWN SWORD

AS Joshua and his bewildered and dismayed people confronted the great heathen fortress-city of Jericho, so we stand in awe before many a heavy and seemingly impossible task.

There it looms before us, its walls rising black and ominous to the very clouds. The archers are gathered on the battlements, and they shoot poisoned arrows straight into our hearts. Balls of flame sweep through the air out of the fortress and fall among our tents. The gates frown massive and impregnable. It is an awful task, this Jericho of ours, a task that is not to be accomplished.

Then when we look at ourselves, our hearts sink still further. We are like Joshua's horde of women and children and untried, undisciplined, and unseasoned men. We do not know what to do, nor could we tell how to do it if we knew what to do. Our nerves are trembling and our hands hang down. There is nothing in our past experience or present equipment that fits us for this terrible task. It is an elephant's load laid suddenly on the back of a pony.

Who has not fallen in the dust before some such Jericho? It may be a speech that must be made, or a

company of lordly guests to be entertained, or a novel position to be filled, or a swift disaster assailing us. It may be a business emergency or a social emergency. It may be an exigency of the spirit, and that is hardest of all.

It is then that, if we are God's children, He sends us the vision that was sent to Joshua. It is a glorious vision of a man with a drawn sword in his hand. The being is all aflame with a white glow. Bursts of fire leap splendidly from his sword. He is light, for disclosure. He is motion and heat, for power. He is a magnificent reminder of the Omnipotent One.

We, like Joshua, do not often understand the vision at first. We also say to him, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" That drawn sword may well be aimed against ourselves. The angel may come as a sickness, or a death, or a fearful hardship, or a sad disappointment. God's ways are not our ways, and often they cross our ways at disconcerting right angles.

But if we ask the mysterious stranger in the right way, he will tell us who he is: "As captain of the host of the Lord am I come." He will assure us of victory. He will show us how to attack our Jericho. His plan will very likely seem inadequate, even absurd; but there is that drawn sword in his hand, and there is the light on his face. He bears the witness in himself that he is true.

It is a great thing to be able to recognize, as Joshua recognized immediately, the captain of the Lord's host; to fall on our faces and worship him; to loose the shoes from our feet in that holy place. Such recognition implies that we also are of the stuff of which the Lord's host is made; not captains, of course, but privates in that glorious, conquering army.

And it is a great thing to hear what the captain of the Lord's host has to say to us, and store it in our memories, and gladly and implicitly obey it. For each one that obeys the Jericho instructions there are a thou-

sand that only hear them. They come to us from pulpit and from the religious press. They sound pealing from every page of the Bible. They ring in the solitudes of our consciences. They beckon us onward from the examples of noble men. The captain of the Lord's host has many voices, and his drawn sword gleams on many hills. Ah, for Joshua's blood in our veins, and his sturdy spirit in our lives!

LIV

CHRIST AS AN EXCOMMUNICATOR

THE catholicity of our Lord is shown in all parts of the gospel records. To be sure, He was sent immediately only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but other sheep He had which were not of that fold, and in His last prayer He prayed that they might all be one, that there might be one fold, one Shepherd.

He sought Zacchæus, Matthew, other publicans. He talked familiarly with the base-lived Samaritan woman, and praised the good Samaritan. He admitted the repentant harlot into His church. He touched lepers. On the cross He accepted the remorseful thief.

And so it is startling to see Christ in the rôle of an excommunicator. It is instructive also; for surely if He excommunicated any then, it was because He had been excommunicating such in times that were past, and He is excommunicating them even to-day. Who were these that were excommunicated, and why did Christ drive them away?

The scene is one of the most striking in all the Bible. There was the vast before-Passover throng, urgently pressing in through the Court of the Gentiles to the inner courts of the Temple. The great Court of the Gentiles was crammed with men and women of all na-

tions. Pentecost possibilities were there on every hand.

But where was the solemnity that should have filled the multitude? Think what the Passover season meant to the Lamb of God! Think what that season had meant to Him for fifteen centuries! At each recurring celebration what converse between the Father and the Son! And now was approaching the culmination and interpretation of it all.

And there in that pillared area so full of great memories men were leading sheep and oxen and carrying cages full of doves and urging their wares upon all passers-by. There were rows of money-changers, giving Jewish coins for the coins of all other nationalities, and easily turning in the process many an ugly penny.

I should love to have seen Christ with the little children in His arms, or in any other scene of tender beauty; but, oh, to have seen Him then in the Temple! A feminine Christ? Note the fire flashing from His face, His body all one swift impulsion, the swelling muscles of His powerful arm! Hear the writhing of the cords as they hiss their indignation through the air! The hucksters flee from His onset as from an embodied lightning stroke. The cattle run under the sting of His lash, men and women tumbling with screams out of the way. The doves cannot be driven out, nor will He let them loose to be lost, but He shouts to their flying owners to come back and carry them out. He overturns the tables of the money-changers with angry pushes, pouring out their money, and no one stops to pick up the rascally coins. It was His father's house, and it had been made a dirty marketplace.

Did He then leave the Temple? I think not; He would not seem to run away. I think He remained with His disciples, and received the crowd as they crept shamefacedly back. It was then that they drew around Him as He spoke of the temple of His body, and many believed.

So we learn whom Jesus would excommunicate. How hardly shall they that trust in riches enter into His kingdom! And what if He should appear in the midst of our modern cities, those great temples of mammon; and in our modern churches, some of which are no less temples of mammon than the cities that surround them; and in the temples of our hearts, where reverence and love should reign, but where He would too easily find set up as idols the banker's bench, the huckster's money-bag! Ah, let us watch our hearts with all diligence, for the day of His appearing may be at hand.

LV

GALLIO ATTENDS TO HIS OWN BUSINESS

GOD had sent a vision to Paul telling him that He had much people in Corinth. The city of merchants was to be far more receptive of the truth than the city of philosophers, as often happens. Finding Athens inhospitable, Paul established in Corinth one of the strongest of his churches. It is coolies and not Mandarins, outcastes and not Brahmins, the Jerry McAuleys and not the Ingersolls, that gladly receive Jesus Christ. Let us not be surprised or cast down when this same thing happens in our town and in connection with our church.

Paul taught in Corinth a year and a half; and the proudest modern cities would give millions of dollars to have Paul for a single day! He had gained many converts, and among them the distinguished Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue.

But when was truth, faithfully presented, allowed to go long unmolested? Sosthenes, the new synagogue ruler in the place of Crispus, must show that he was

not tainted with the new heresy by prosecuting the chief heretic. Moreover Gallio, the pro-consul, the kindly brother of the philosopher Seneca, had but recently arrived from Rome, and as an inexperienced ruler would be open to approach. It was an excellent opportunity for a plot, and Sosthenes availed himself of it.

Paul's enemies must have seized him when he was alone, or comparatively alone. They must have come in force, and hurried him, an angry mob of bigoted Jews, to the place where Gallio was sitting to hear complaints. Unfortunately for Sosthenes, this was outdoors.

"This fellow," bawled the Jews, "is persuading men to worship God contrary to the law." They meant that Paul was introducing a new religion that was not permitted by the Roman law, which, to be sure, allowed many other religions than the Latin, but only after it had formally passed upon them and given them the right to exist.

Paul opened his mouth. He was ready enough to take up the cudgels for Christianity, whenever he saw that it would do any good. He knew that it would be given him in every such hour what he should say. Every such persecution was a new chance to advertise Christianity, and to win possible converts. Christ was dumb before His accusers only because He, knowing what was in men, perceived that they had determined to close their hearts to the truth. Paul did not have that knowledge, certainly not regarding Gallio.

But Gallio would not let Paul speak. I do not blame him for that. How could he know that the greatest philosopher of all time stood before him in the person of that little Jew? Gallio had his work to do, and busy men have learned to cut short unnecessary talk.

Gallio would do his duty. "If this were a matter of actual wrong-doing," he said, "I would listen to you (even though I do not like your manners, he implied).

But this seems to be only a dispute about words and names, about your own petty law and not the majestic law of Rome. Attend to it yourselves." With that he had his lictors drive the clamorous Jews from his judgment seat.

That was the chance of the Jew-hating Greeks. They seized Sosthenes, and beat him in full view of the judgment seat, and with no interference from Gallio. Paul was evidently popular in Corinth.

Well, I admire Gallio! Heathen though he was, he can teach us Christians a lesson many of us need to learn. Many a life is wasted with dabbling in questions of mere words and names. Many a denomination of Christians is engaged in no better business than just this dispute about words and names. And we have a big business to manage,—the King's business, our Father's business. Like Gallio, we shall do much good without knowing it if we only go steadily on with this business which is ours, and let the fighters about words and names have it out among themselves.

LVI

THE DISCIPLES GO CANDIDATING

JOHAN and James were better off than the rest of the disciples, in all probability, with possibly the exception of Matthew. Their worldly goods would give them a certain ascendancy even among the followers of the Carpenter.

Besides, they were leaders by temperament. They were impetuous men, "sons of thunder." They were borne to the front along the tide of their eager convictions and the ardour of their minds. It is no wonder that when Christ began to speak about the thrones in His

kingdom that were waiting for His disciples, John and James should think of those on the right and left of the King, the thrones of the King's chief officers, and should fancy themselves seated thereon.

Perhaps their mother, Salome, put the thought into their heads. At any rate, one of the accounts represents her as preferring the request. Mothers—God bless them!—are always ambitious for their sons, and not always wise with their ambition. But their unwisdom may well be forgiven for their love.

But mother and sons evidently came together and put forward their claim: "Let us sit, one on your right hand and the other on your left, in your glory!" If Peter was within earshot, how he must have scowled! But the three probably took care to be alone with the Master.

It was an ill-timed request, coming as the Saviour was on His last sad journey up to Jerusalem, there to be offered up for the sins of the world. John and James did not realize that, however; and perhaps they would have been only the more urgent if they had realized it. How many of our own prayers are ill-timed!

But is it not right to seek situations of honour? Are candidates in the wrong,—candidates for public office, candidates for pulpits, candidates for clerkships and for professional chairs and for kitchen ranges? Must the office always seek the man, and never the man seek the office?

Certainly it is right to seek situations, but only for service, never for pre-eminence. Christ placed Himself at the head of His little band. Paul made himself the authoritative leader of the churches he planted. But Christ and Paul recognized the glory of the world as a temptation of Satan. They both lived not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

And so Christ, when this request came to Him, turned at once to the question of service, and gave the candidates

a civil-service examination: "Can you drink of my cup? Can you be baptized with my baptism?" Christ knew well what thrones in His kingdom meant: cups of woe, baptisms of death.

That ready and confident Yes, spoken by the two candidates, proves that they were not able. They became able. Baptized by Pentecost into Christ's Spirit, James became the first glorious martyr of the church, and John received grace to endure the slow martyrdom of persecution and imprisonment longer than any of the other disciples. Never after Calvary could they have given that Yes so readily as they gave it then!

But even if the Yes had been spoken with a full consciousness of all it implied, Christ could not have granted their request. Thrones in His kingdom are not to be given as favours; they are assigned to those that have proved themselves worthy of them, and the proof of John and James was yet to come. More than that, the Son would not speak for the Father, as mere men are often conceitedly so ready to do.

The ten other disciples heard about it, whether they were present or not, and were filled with indignation. Here was a plain infraction of that principle of brotherhood and self-abnegation which was fundamental in Christ's kingdom. Did Christ sympathize with their indignation? At any rate, He took the opportunity to draw a gentle lesson. "Out in the world," He said, "men lord it over other men; but it shall not be so among my disciples. If you really want to be great, become a servant. Yea, become not only a servant but a sacrifice. For the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

LVII

THE MEN THAT TARRIED BY THE STUFF

DAVID walked on thin ice more than once in his eventful career, and once he fell through,—in the matter of Bathsheba. But, with that exception, the shepherd king never found the ice beneath him so thin as when, pursued savagely by Saul, he took up his despairing abode with the hereditary foes of his country, the Philistines.

There he, whose very breath was truth, was obliged to lead a life of deception. He must seem hostile to his native land, which he loved with all the ardour of his passionate nature. He must fight the enemies of Philistia, which were often the allies of his own people. To avoid the jealous intrigues of the capital, Gath, he was obliged to get off by himself, with his faithful followers, and live in Ziklag. And worst of all, he was ever in danger of being drafted into war against the Lord's anointed, that very Saul whose life he had twice reverently spared when it was thrown into his hands.

At last this, which he must have feared for months, actually happened, and David was summoned to accompany the Philistine host in a campaign against Saul. He obeyed with apparent alacrity, and was saved from what would have been to him the most terrible tragedy only by the suspicions of the Philistine captains. It was "better luck than good management." More than once, during this trying experience, David must have wished that, instead of going over to the Philistines, he had followed the example of Moses and retired to the wilderness, even to farthest Sinai.

So David, while the Philistines pressed on to kill Saul

and Jonathan, returned with his six hundred followers to Ziklag, only to find that in his absence the town had been captured by the ever-watchful Amalekites, burned to the ground, its goods all stolen, and all the wives and children carried away. A wail of anguish arose from those six hundred, strong warriors as they were, and they wept till they could weep no more.

It was characteristic of David that he did not rush off in pursuit of the kidnapers till he had received favourable intimations from the ephod, the sacred oracle. Thus bidden, however, he marched confidently, and, led by the resuscitated Egyptian, he found the robber band gorging themselves with the spoil. It was short work for those enraged four hundred to attack them, vast in numbers as they were, and recapture all that they had taken.

"Those four hundred," I said, because two hundred of the six hundred had tarried behind at the brook Besor, too faint with their prolonged marches to pursue any further. And when, in the happy return, the spoil was to be divided, it was a question whether to give to these two hundred any more than just what they had lost. That was what justice said, but David was more than just, he was always generous. Said he, in words which became from that time a law to Israel, "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall part alike."

It is Christ's law of "she hath done what she could." In accordance with it the Marthas and the Marys share equally in Christ's love. Like honour is to be given to James and to John. Luther and Luther's wife—who is to apportion their shares? Indeed, most great men say that the larger part of their praise belongs to their wives and mothers, those that have tarried by the stuff.

All the world is divided into bands of four hundred and of two hundred. The brook Besor runs all through human society. Some are reformers, making the speeches and in the front of the battle: others, no less necessary,

remain in the office directing the letters that bring in the sinews of war. Of two brothers, one goes to the theological seminary and the other stays on the farm and pays the bills. There are capitalists, and labourers. There are cities, and rural communities. Everyone stands on one side or the other of the brook Besor, and many of us stand on both sides at different times. What a comfort it is, when we think that we are obscure, with no battle-glory attaching to our names, that when the Captain of our salvation makes His final just awards He will render to all earnest, faithful workers their dues, and that we, with the heroes of the front, shall share alike in His "Well done!"

LVIII

THE COOLING TOUCH OF CHRIST

IF you were asked what are the most beautiful words of the New Testament, which would you choose? Of course you would not know which to select; but I for one should need to think long before rejecting those of Matt. 8:15: "He touched her hand, and the fever left her."

Do the words, I wonder, mean as much to you as they have come to mean to me? They bring before my mind a humble fisherman's home, for Peter's mother-in-law was living with Peter. Peter was probably the oldest of the disciples, and therefore his wife's mother was probably an old woman; but she was not too old to be the ministrant of the household. Indeed, for all we know, Peter's wife herself may have been dead, her mother taking her place in caring for Peter and his home. The account, brief as it is, seems to me to carry that implication.

Peter's brother Andrew was there, with Peter, and

also James and John, their business partners. And the Master was there. It was evidently His first visit to the house since the old woman's sickness, for "they tell Him of her." Doubtless it was in the hope that He would heal her that they had brought Him there, and that they were themselves assembled. "They besought him for her," says Luke, for they plainly loved her; and what a good lover was Peter! Yes, and John!

Shame on the mother-in-law stories of our would-be wits! Every wife and husband should tear in pieces the cruel and unjust or thoughtless paper that prints them. Happily, they are not so common of recent years as they were two decades ago.

It was a great fever, as Luke, the physician, notes; and it requires all three synoptists to tell the full story among them. How the Good Physician came and stood over her, looking down on her anguished form with loving, compassionate gaze. How He "rebuked" the fever, perhaps recognizing a Satanic influence back of it; or at any rate seeing in the disease something very real that He could command and that would obey Him.

But, as always with Christ, the personal touch was needed, to supplement even His words of life. Too many that would lead men to Christ deal with His words alone, and forget the personal touch. "He touched her hand, and the fever left her." There was an instant change. The red glow left her face. Recognition came into her wandering eyes. Peace and intelligence came to her delirious mind.

Then the Good Physician immediately raised her up, giving her back at once to the life of activity. No long and tedious convalescence wearies His patients.

And at once she began to minister to those who had been ministering to her during her sickness, and who were worn with long watching. This shows what kind of mother-in-law she was, and why they all loved her. Also it shows what sort of person Christ can heal. Also

it shows what a restored sinner will of necessity do with his new-found life.

But when I read that verse in Matthew I do not think alone of this scene, beautiful as it is. I think also of the world fever, a "great fever" indeed. Who but has it, in one or more of its many forms?

It may be the fever of overwork, or the fever of oppressive social duties, or a feverous fear of the future; yes, and it may be the fever of greed, or of lust, or of intemperance, or of ambition. They are great fevers, every one of them.

Count your pulse! Take your temperature! Are you feverish? Then you are out of touch with Christ. Reach out your hand, though blindly. You will find His cool fingers, pressing yours with a firm, loving grasp. And from them peace will surely flow, peace and certain healing, into your distracted soul.

LIX

A CHANGE OF OBJECT BUT NOT OF OCCUPATION

CHRIST the Carpenter ceased to make chairs and tables and yokes, but He did not cease to be a carpenter. He changed His object but not His occupation, and, leaving the shop at Nazareth, began to build character. Yes, and when He passed from earth He was still a carpenter, and began, as He said, to build for us our eternal mansions.

Paul did not cease to be a tentmaker when he preached or wrote, but made in his sermons and epistles a tabernacle of faith for all the world. Matthew the publican stopped collecting the taxes that could be paid in coin, but began to deal rather in the minted gold of

the Saviour's utterances, which he hoarded until he became rich in them, and enriched all of us. David the shepherd boy became shepherd no longer of mere sheep but of all Israel. Luke, the physician, largely abandoned his practice, but it was only to prepare for all time a store of soul medicine under the direction of the Great Physician.

And so it is of especial interest to see how the fishers among the Twelve ceased to fish fish, but not to be fishermen.

The story is most helpful to all workers. It is strange that Matthew, right there in Capernaum, should leave out so much of it; but he tells his own conversion in merely a verse. It is strange that Peter, through Mark, should tell us so little about it; but he, like Matthew, is thinking of a subject bigger than himself. It was reserved for Luke, coming later, perhaps, to gather up the full account, as a physician who would seek out causes in all their details.

So Luke tells us how the famous teacher, talking by the sea to an eager multitude, was so pressed upon by the enthusiastic crowd that it was difficult to make them all hear. How, in order to get room for His discourse, He withdrew a little from His audience, as every speaker must, entering a boat whose owners were at a distance busily washing their nets. Think of washing fish-nets when Jesus was to be heard! But perhaps their consciences were touched and they did not want to hear. Perhaps the call had already come to them, and they were fighting against it.

And so when Jesus was through with the crowd He held a little after meeting. The fishermen were not to escape Him, with all their net-washing.

But before He comes to the point they must have a bit of experimental religion. It came, as all experimental religion comes, in a matter of obedience. What was He, a carpenter, to dictate to expert fishermen when

to let down their nets, and where, especially after they had been fishing unsuccessfully all night! Peter's answer showed that he was not far from the Kingdom: "At thy word, I will."

And the result, when the great multitude of fishes began to sink both of the boats? What it is whenever men come into contact with the supernatural: a feeling of sinfulness and awe, and a wish to get away from this reminder of divine power and purity and of contrasting human imperfection: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." Most spiritualism, if not all, disproves itself by its horrible familiarity with the supernatural and its light ease in its assumed presence.

But see Christ draw the net. His sermons are not allowed to end with a dash. He brings them to a full period in a bold imperative: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men!"

Notice that there is no arguing, no Whereas and Therefore and Q. E. D. They had had all the Christian evidence they needed, as most of the folks in our congregations have had. What is usually needed is a yielding of the will, not a drill of the mind. "Quit your meanness!" cried Sam Jones. "Come forward and surrender to Christ!" cried Moody. "Raise your hands in token of your desire to be a Christian!" cried Chapman. "Take the sawdust trail!" shouts Billy Sunday. "Follow me," said Christ. Every statement of truth and duty and privilege should end with some such command.

"And they straightway followed Him." That "straightway" is the seal of Christ's ministry. He was a convincing preacher. He got results. There was no "I'll see about it," no "Perhaps, but some other time." Promptness is a characteristic of a skilful fisherman. Now is always the accepted time, if you would land a trout or a soul.

LX

CHRIST'S MOST PERPLEXING MIRACLE

WHY, it is often asked, did our Lord curse the fig-tree on which He found no figs, but only leaves? Some have thought that the occasion was too trifling for such an exhibition of His majestic power. Others have even dared to see in the action a petulance unworthy of a sage, to say nothing of a Saviour. But let us see.

It was probably after a long night of fasting and prayer. Jesus was on His way to another day of urgent pleading in the Temple, one of His last few days of labour for His people. He was weary with that long watching, weary with the beginning of His Gethsemanes.

On the day before, from the side of this same Mount of Olives, He had gazed long and tenderly upon the holy city, and wept over its coming destruction. Now as He reached the same point, His face grew set again, and His disciples looked upon Him with reverent awe.

Aside from the path He saw a fig-tree full of leaves. It was a place of figs. Bethphage near by means "the place of the winter fig," which remains on the tree all winter. The appearance of leaves on the tree would suggest that some of those winter figs were there, or else the first ripe figs of the new season. But on reaching the tree to satisfy His hunger and fortify His body for the labour before Him, our Lord found "nothing but leaves."

Thereupon He said, "Let there be no fruit from thee henceforward forever." And at once the tree began to wither away. "A shuddering fear," says Trench, "may

have run through all the leaves of the tree, which was thus stricken at its heart." The disciples (except Matthew) seem not to have noticed it till the next morning, though all heard the command, which was also a prophecy.

Why was this curse cast upon the blameless tree? Well, we need not worry about it, since it was not a conscious being. Surely He that made it could rightfully destroy it, without giving reasons to any one.

But note the reason He gave. "Have faith in God," was His interpretation of His act. May He not well have known that the tree was barren, and have worked the miracle only for a striking text from which to preach the little sermon that followed? What more would His disciples need in the sad and troubled days to come than His exhortation and promise that "whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them." And may He not well have looked beyond His disciples and their immediate needs to us, His disciples, through all ages to come?

But more than that. The fig-tree was a picture and symbol of outward show unwarranted by inward excellence. It was a veritable Pharisee, such a one as those that daily were disgusting His sincere soul. It must have been a stanch pleasure to Jesus to leave that dry skeleton of a tree standing on the Mount as a symbol of the fate of all Pharisees and hypocrites, then in Jerusalem, and world without end!

LXI

THE GRADUAL SUN

I HAVE seen a wonderful set of moving pictures that represented the gathering of clouds around the summits of a mountain range and their gradual dissipation. The great masses of vapour curled up slowly from the horizon until they buried the peaks, and showers fell here and there; then gradually they scattered and tumbled off the scene, leaving the mountain peaks clear as before. By the magic of this wonderful new instrument the atmospheric processes of an entire day were condensed into a few minutes, and transformations usually too slow for appreciation except in their result became swiftly moving phenomena. I felt almost as if I had been present at an hour of creation.

What a marvellous thing it would be to witness such a moving picture of the scenes of primal creation! Those would indeed be snap-shots worth having! And truly we have them, to the mental eye, in the wonderfully graphic opening chapters of Genesis. As we read we can see the whirl of the cosmic chaos, the universal plasm, vast, mysterious, throbbing with the life breathed into it by the Infinite. Reading on, we perceive the mass drawing together here and there in enormous nodules of star-dust, circling in ever more determined currents, till at last out of the clash of atoms heat is born, and out of heat springs light.

Then, as we read further, we are struck by an apparent contradiction. After the concentric spheres have drawn apart into a vague firmament amid the flowing nebula above and the flowing nebula below, after the seas have gathered themselves uncertainly together and

the dry land has risen tentatively here and there above the flood, even after the crude forms of life have begun to appear, the succulent gigantic plants of earth's infant forests,—not until then do we read of the lights of heaven, the sun and moon and stars, and the distinction of day and night.

The early critics of the Bible made great mockery of this,—to create light and then forget it through three creative days, and come back to it in the fourth day, creating it afresh! “What a bungling fable is this Genesis of yours!” the critics cried.

But reverent science now sees in that the chief wonder of this remarkable chapter, which so unaccountably, in the dawn of human thought, reaches up to the conclusions of modern research, snatching, at a bound, the painful results of millenniums of investigation. For surely light would be the first effect of the clash of matter; but for ages it would be light that lies close to darkness, only faint gleams of light here and there, seen rarely through immense depths of vapour. The suns and moons and stars would all be there, but hidden from a spectator on our forming world. Not till the vapour had fallen in water to make the oceans, and the carbon had largely been drawn from the air in the luxuriant vegetation that forms our coal-beds, would the cloud-curtain be pulled slowly aside, and the lights of heaven break in upon the enraptured earth. Not till the fourth creative period, precisely as Genesis has it, would the sun and moon and stars appear.

And I am interested in this, not only as a capital example of the supernatural wisdom bestowed upon the writers of the Bible, but also as a parallel, on a stupendous scale, to the operations of Jehovah in the narrow realm of our individual lives. The suns of truth that rise upon humanity are always gradual suns! When does a great law burst clearly upon the world of thought? When does a great principle of action rise

unclouded upon a human soul? The entire Bible, beginning with this first chapter of Genesis, is a gradual disclosure of light, till the noonday shining of the Light of the World. And there is still new light to break forth out of God's Word.

LXII

WHEN A KING ASKED THE ADVICE OF A WOMAN

JOSIAH was a wise king: he was wise enough to ask advice. He was still wiser than that: he was wise enough to go where he could get it, though it was to the house of a simple woman.

If Josiah had not been so wise a king, he would not have been in a predicament,—or rather, he would not have known that he was in one. If Ahaz, now, had found the Book of the Law in the rubbish heap of the Temple which he had dishonoured, there would have been no cries of dismay, no alarms of conscience. Indeed, Ahaz may have found the Book and tossed it back upon the heap again; why, he may even have put it there in the first place.

But to the pious young King Josiah those great commands of Deuteronomy, those solemn curses and blessings, came like peals of thunder from the skies, came like the voice of all the outraged centuries. He had sinned, his nation had sinned, awfully and all but irreparably sinned,—the stern words convicted them.

Conviction of sin is a dreadful state; would it were more common! For since sin exists, conviction of sin is a blessed state. Only let it lead us, not to despair, but to Huldah.

Judah must have been destitute of holy men. There was no prophet or priest to whom Josiah cared to go. All the wisdom and piety of the nation seemed centered in this one woman, in Huldah.

We are told provokingly little about her. She was married, and doubtless she spent far more time in house-keeping than in prophesying. Her husband was the keeper of the wardrobe—king's wardrobe, probably, and not priests'. Probably Huldah had far more than he to do with the keeping of that wardrobe. She lived, we are told, in the second district of the city (for so it should be translated and not "college"—a translation that has given rise to much wide-of-the-mark commendation of Huldah's learning); that is, in the northern part of the valley that divides Jerusalem into two parts, or perhaps to the west of it. And she was known as "the prophetess"—that is all we know about her.

Except, indeed, what we can learn from her message to Josiah, and that is much.

For it shows us that Huldah was prompt: she asked no time for meditation.

And it shows us that she was conscious of God's indwelling: "Thus saith the Lord," she unhesitatingly began.

And it pictures her stanchly loyal to Jehovah: he is "the Lord God of Israel" in her message, and Baal and the asherah are *not* gods of Israel.

And she appears to be no respecter of persons. She says brusquely, "Tell the man that sent you to me," though immediately she adds that the man is the king.

And she is conscious that sin brings its inevitable penalty. The Deuteronomic curses must fall. She sees a desolated country, a nation paying the sad penalties of its iniquity.

But, finally, if she is manlike in foretelling doom, she is womanlike in offering mercy: because Josiah's heart is tender, and humble before God, he himself is to be

spared the horror of the impending woes, but they are to come after his time.

Is there in all the Bible a finer condensation of the spirit of prophecy? We have here both law and gospel, Elijah and Jesus. Verily, when women do prophesy, they do it well!

LXIII

WHEN PRIDE MADE OUR LEXICONS

FEW passages in the Bible are more interesting and suggestive than the account of the Tower of Babel.

Surely there was a time when "the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." Blissful age, when no one studied foreign tongues, irregular verbs, fifth declensions, idioms, and syntax! Happy times, when there was no thumbing of lexicons or phrase books, but each man could talk freely with every other man he met! There were no "interlinears," and there was no temptation to ride a "pony." It was all one's native tongue, and plain sailing.

That meant one nation, of course. Men can live together when they can understand one another. Wars arise from these incomprehensible jargons of ours. When a man jabbers like an ape, how can he be our brother? How can he and I have a community of interests when we cannot read one another's books or newspapers, or even the signs in one another's streets? What kind of family life would you have if one child talked French and another Japanese, the father Choctaw and the mother Malagasy?

The one language also meant a common work. It was easy in those days for them to unite on a great plan.

They could make brick together because they could talk together, and they could mix mud for mortar and build together their tower that should reach to heaven, surrounded by a city that should rule the earth.

And so the one language came also to mean pride, there on the plain in the land of Shinar. Men were so strong in this union that they were self-sufficing. Earth was mighty, and had no need of heaven.

It was the story that has duplicated itself so many times since, the story of the divisive power of pride. When men set themselves above the Almighty, though by the haughty use of a good thing, God will turn even that blessing to their undoing. So the Tower of Babel, that should have been a monument to human love and co-operation, became a symbol of schism and discord. So in their pride they lost the basis of their pride, the oneness of speech, and became scattered upon the face of the earth. So every brick in the tower of pride became a language stumbling-block for the feet of all generations since.

But it need not have been so, and it need not remain so. There is but one language in heaven, and there will be but one on earth when earth has become the kingdom of heaven.

I am not making a plea for Esperanto or Ido or any other universal language. That may come, or we may stick to our strong German, and musical Italian, and vivacious French, and multiform English. These varieties of tongues, after all, constitute a beautiful pleasure,—just as the varieties of faces. However lovely the countenances of the angels, we do not want them to look all alike.

But the mischief of Babel may be undone. We may all come to speak the universal language, love. We may build another Babel tower, not in pride but in humility,—a vast cathedral tower to the praise of God, surmounted by the cross of Jesus Christ. And at the rearing of that

tower the primal language will come back, if only by the speech of the eye and the eloquence of the hand-clasp, and the new Babel will mean universal brotherhood.

LXIV

THE MOST REMARKABLE OF ALL VISITS

OUR Lord left His native country only once, unless, which is not likely, His visit to "the borders of Tyre and Sidon" carried Him over into Phœnicia. But that once is the most noteworthy visit ever made by anybody.

Think what was involved when the child Jesus was taken down to Egypt, and dwelt there for a season.

It was the essence of the New going to the essence of the Old.

Egypt may be typified by its mummies. Its civilization tended to fossilizing. Its history is that of the mute Sphinx, gazing vaguely over a waste of sand. Its religion looked downward to the beasts rather than upward to heaven, and inward to the penetralia of the temples rather than outward in missionary enterprises for the betterment of the world. Its first-born were ever dying, and not merely as the climax of the plagues. Joseph brought the gray old nation into touch with more of life than it had ever known, and with Moses and his host Egypt drove it away again.

Then when Christ came, it was as the incarnation of divine progress. Though He was the Ancient of Days, He was the ever-new and the ever-renewing. By Him were all beginnings made, and He is the source of every change.

If the theory of evolution is ever proved, it will only be a proof of one phase of Christ's activity. Through

all ages, from the time when He said, "Let there be light," to the time when He said, "I am the Light of the world," He was engaged in breaking light from darkness, in bringing beauty from ugliness, order out of chaos, life out of death.

And yet there had been the Egypts. Assyria was one of them. India and China were others. Even Greece and Rome were others. Egypt was the type of them all.

Their religions all led men down to the brutal and not up to the celestial. Their civilizations tended to the stationary or the retrograde. The world had been growing worse and not better. The Christ of creation was being defeated. Herod was the proof of it. Egypt was the proof of it.

Therefore when the child Jesus was brought down to Egypt it was the greatest spiritual challenge of all history. You have seen a print of Oliver Merson's wonderful picture, "The Repose in Egypt." Mary and the Babe lying between the outstretched paws of the Sphinx, and the sad, silent stone face, weary with its long and hopeless waiting, is alit with the radiance from the face of the Holy Child.

That Light in Egypt is a fact, a spiritual fact. Christ came to earth precisely for that, to meet all dark riddles, and bring to them the solution of God's love.

That is what is meant by the prophecy which Matthew rightly found so significant, "Out of Egypt did I call my son." Hope out of hopelessness, light out of midnight, progress out of stagnation, life out of death,—out of Egypt, Christ!

But Jesus returned to Palestine? Yes, and **no**. Really our Lord never leaves an Egypt which He has once entered. He is more in Egypt now than ever before. By each British and American missionary He is still there. By each Bible, each hospital, each mission school, each Sunday school, each church of His rejoic-

ing faith, He is still in Egypt. All are partial embodiments of His gracious presence, and some day Egypt will be His entirely, and all the happy world.

LXV

THE MOST HELPFUL MIRACLE

THE worst evils are not always those that concern themselves with the greatest matters; sometimes they are connected with the least matters, with mere trifles. The great evils daze, benumb, shock into insensibility. The little ones drive us frantic with tiny, incessant stings. One of the most terrible of deaths ever devised by inhuman torturers is to expose a man naked in a mosquito-infested jungle.

This is why blind people are usually happier than deaf or stammering people. Blindness is a fearful calamity, but the shock of it is quickly over. From the beginning each day is easier than the preceding. The blind learn continually to do more things that the seeing can do. Their other senses marvellously take the place of the lost one. They do not see what they are missing and gradually they fail to realize it. They only realize that they are all surrounded by kindness and sympathy and helpfulness and love.

But if one stammers, one meets ridicule everywhere. Often it is politely hidden, and then it is all the harder to bear. There are smiles whenever one attempts to speak, and one must speak so often! Who pities a stammerer? Who helps him, or can help him?

And deafness is still worse, because it inconveniences others so much. It leads to a vast amount of evident impatience. And the deaf man sees what he is missing. He sees laughing faces, and misses the point of the joke.

He sees rapt faces, and loses the eloquence. He sees questioning faces, and cannot reply. Birds fly past him, but they are dumb birds. White fingers move swiftly over a keyboard, but the piano is silent. Household chatter is plainly going on, but only the dry skeleton of events is for him; the living, warm flesh is for others. And he does not grow better, but decidedly worse. And no sense can take the place of hearing, except with fortunate training and in partial degree, the eyes.

Now you know what I think was Christ's most helpful miracle. It was not the great miracle of raising the dead or opening the eyes of the blind or restoring the leper, but it was the unique act of healing the man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech.

The miracle was seemingly not wrought without great effort. Our Lord looked up to heaven and sighed. Then at the word "Ephphatha!" "Be opened!" the wonder came, "his ears were opened and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain."

What a flood of half-forgotten sensations burst upon those long silent ears! How they rushed over the dead nerves, and almost burst the glad brain with ecstasy! The cries of children at their play, the buzz of insects, the rattle of wheels in the street, the wind stirring the leaves overhead,—how crowded with dear remembered sounds the world suddenly became!

And how proud he was of his recovered speech! He could hardly keep from shouting and singing. How voluble he instantly became! He would give an oration at each street corner, save for his eagerness to hurry home with his joy and share it with the loved ones there.

No wonder the spectators were astonished. If we may judge from the hints in the account, this miracle amazed men more than the raising of the dead or the walking on the sea. They argued that sickness was largely caused by demon-possession; and in the sad

case of a deaf and dumb man the demons had seized the only channel through which the command to leave could reach them, and the only channel through which the petition for help could reach the healer! How was one to get at a soul thus imprisoned?

But it is no mystery to us, save as all of Christ's life is a glorious mystery. He who made the ears and taught the tongue to speak can surely do what He will with His own. And indeed, in a sense, it was Christ's one mission on earth to work the Ephphatha miracle, to open our deaf ears to the voice of God's love, and to unloose our tongues to tell the good news.

LXVI

A CORONATION ON A HOUSETOP

WHERE was Saul crowned king of Israel? On the top of Samuel's home at Ramah.

Of course the outward ceremony was not performed there, but the outward ceremony is the least matter in an affair of this kind. What is essential is the inner coronation. That makes a man a king, and not the drops of sacred oil and the pressure of a golden circle upon one's brow.

Saul went up on that housetop a simple rustic. He went up, to be sure, a splendid specimen of a man physically, head and shoulders above ordinary men, and of a giant's strength with his giant's body. It was a much bewildered rustic that ascended to the housetop with the revered head of the nation, the majestic prophet whose like had not been seen since Moses. Remarkable deference had been paid to him on that day, and he was thinking of the glorious opportunity he would have for bragging in rural circles after his return; but Saul went

up on the housetop a farmer still, with no thought above his father's asses which were not yet found.

Could we have heard that conversation of Samuel's with Saul, up in that quiet place under the stars, we should know how kings are made.

The old man must have laid bare his heart before the young man. He must have pictured to him the careless, disobedient, vainglorious nation. He must have shown him the national weakness, back of all the national pride. His voice must have become stern with all of a prophet's judgment as he spoke.

And then Samuel must have grown sad as he confessed his own failure to control the people, to hold them true to Jehovah, to preserve the nation pure for his divine Master. "A new hand on the reins, perhaps," said Samuel, "a new personality, new methods, may accomplish what I have failed to accomplish, may save the chosen people for their high destiny."

And Samuel would not stop without urging the lofty claims of duty. He was commending to the eager spirit before him the grandest of all endeavours, the attempt to lead men to God, to win men back for their Creator. This is the chief of tasks because in it the toiler is working most directly in God's stead and for God's dearest desires. The very heavens must have bent closer to listen as Samuel pleaded this cause to Saul.

It was as Saul listened that his coronation came.

Samuel left him after a while to sleep up there on the housetop; and yet, tired as he was with his long journey on foot, I do not believe that Saul slept much that night. A new world of thought had been opened before him. New sensations had seized him, holy ambitions had been roused within him. Here was great work to be done, wondrous work to be done. What—oh, what—if he should be the man to do it?

As I think of that stirring scene I ask myself seriously, "Have you yet ascended your housetop? Have you yet

really listened to Samuel? Have you yet received your coronation?"

If I have, it will mean kingdom-thoughts and not thoughts of asses. If I have, it will mean prophesying in my turn. If I have, it will mean arming against the Ammonites and against the Philistines. If I have, it will widen my farm to a nation, perhaps to the wide world.

The ruler of earth's mightiest empire, as I write, is soon to be crowned. It will be of no avail unless he has already received, as I believe he has, this coronation of the housetop. And I, if I have received it, shall envy no king that ever reigned.

LXVII

DAVID RECEIVES A PROFITABLE DENIAL

NO wonder David longed to build a temple for his God. The Shepherd King was an outdoor man. No one knew better than he that the groves were God's first temple. He had worshipped in the long aisles of the forests, and beneath the pillared dome of the midnight heavens. He had heard the chant of nature, and watched the processional of the seasons. In his own inspired anthems he had reared a temple of beautiful words that imaged these beautiful temples of day and night.

But David had also been a homeless wanderer, and he knew from long lack the pride and blessedness of a habitation. He had had more than his share of precarious existence, and hardly since that fate-filled day when he bore provisions to his brothers in the army had he known stability and a home. But he knew that his God had shared his wanderings, and now he would have Him share his permanence. It was not meet that he should dwell in a palace while his Deity dwelt in a tent.

Also to the reverent soul of the Psalmist no task could be so delightful as the building of a temple. He was a poet, and a poet is a maker. David's skill in fashioning odes he would lavish upon arches. He who could so marvellously adorn thought with the graces of expression would rejoice in rich material embroideries and in the delicate tracery of the silversmith. If David had built the temple, it would have been a poet's dream of beauty as well as the glad tribute of a devotee.

No wonder also that Nathan approved the plan. It was as congenial to the prophet's heart as to the king's. He rejoiced in Jehovah's glory as David did, and at least on one terrible occasion he was closer than his master to the divine life.

On this occasion also he came nearer to the will of God, and his was the difficult duty of telling David that his high and holy ambition was denied by Jehovah.

Why it was denied is not immediately plain. David himself said that it was because he was a man of war; but his wars were righteous wars, and God did not condemn them. Rather was it, as many scholars think, because David's wars meant an unsettled state of the nation, fitly typified by the tent-temple in which Jehovah dwelt; and God would not have a permanent abode until His people had won a permanent peace. God would share this, as all other trials, with His children.

And is not that why Nathan was bidden to console David by promising him a perpetual lineage and a permanent throne? It is as if Jehovah said, "I shall have a better house than any of wood and stone: it is thy heart, King David, and the hearts of thy descendants forever." What that meant of divine indwelling David did not imagine; no one imagined till the coming of "Great David's greater Son."

And thus it was that David received a denial and gained a dynasty. And David's lot may become our own.

LXVIII

DAVID LETS HIS CHANCES GO

IN our modern parlance one of the descriptions of an enterprising man is that he "seizes his chances, grasps his opportunity." Before I join in the praise of such a man I want to know just what his chances are. Some—many—opportunities are to be neglected, and neglected with emphasis.

David was a wide-awake man. Few in the world's history have been so wide-awake, toward the natural and the spiritual world, toward man and God. He "did not let the grass grow under his feet." He was "up and coming." His advance was marvellous. "From Shepherd-boy to the Throne" is a title that would do credit to any volume in the library of biographies of self-made men.

He was no "sissy," this young man who could slay a lion and a bear and a Goliath, and quiet a half-crazed monarch, and lead a band of outlaws for years in the wilderness. His eye was keen and steady, his foot was quick, his muscles were like steel, his heart was unmoved by fear. He was the last man whom you would expect to let his mortal enemy escape out of his hands; and yet two of just such chances he let slip.

They were sore temptations. Here he was, a cave-dweller, though he had all right to a palace; a fugitive, though son-in-law of the king; an outlaw, though the anointed of Jehovah and the chosen successor to Saul. And here was Saul blundering upon his retreat, going to sleep in his cave, and so thoroughly in his hands that he could cut off the skirt of his robe. Or, later, here was the camp of Saul so poorly guarded, and all its

members so soundly asleep, that David and Abishai could steal the spear and water-cruise from the side of the slumbering king. What opportunities for avenging at a stroke the long injustice and cruelty, and placing himself where God meant him to be! How few self-made men would have neglected these chances to make their fortunes!

But that fragment of cloth in David's hand was his truest badge of royalty. That stolen spear was his most potent mace of power and authority. That water-cruise contained his genuine anointing-fluid.

For by these tokens David showed the world what real success is. False success is the saddest failure, and any success before God's time or not in God's manner and by God's methods is false success. A throne prematurely ascended crumbles beneath the headstrong aspirant. A crown snatched before the time grows to a fool's cap. Kings know that; many "self-made men" do not know it, or forget it.

I sometimes wonder what would have happened if David had not let these two chances go; if he had taken the life of Saul, thus strangely placed in his hands. Would Jonathan, his affection for David alienated, his loyalty to David crushed, have ascended his father's throne, speedily have gained the enthusiastic support of the people, and with an ability to which Saul was a stranger have hunted down David, executed his father's murderer, and then have become himself the founder of a new and mighty nation? The speculation is idle, for David was a wise man. He knew what opportunities it is best to miss.

LXIX

CHRIST'S MOST DRAMATIC MIRACLE

ALL the most powerful elements of the drama were present.

There was action, mighty and tragic. It was in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. A storm, sucked down through the bordering ravines into that vast depression in the earth's surface, was tearing the water into foam, and opening horrid depths in which a little boat was now swallowed up, and from which again it was spewed angrily forth.

The night was black as the deepest doom. The winds howled madly, and the boat shrieked in every timber.

The disciples, hardened fishermen though many of them were, and wonted to precisely this sudden and appalling danger, were terrified, for the boat was actually filling with the waves, and it must soon go down.

And now behold the dramatic contrast.

Yonder, in the stern, His head upon a cushion, His weary body stretched out on the deck, see Christ asleep! A peaceful smile is on His face, and His breath is regular as in the boyhood cot at Nazareth.

Thus, and not thus, was Jonah asleep over on the Mediterranean, in the midst of an equal storm. The ancient prophet was worn out with a mental struggle in which fear and disobedience had triumphed. His was the sleep of presumption, that has cast the die, and now defies all elements of angry Deity.

But our Lord's was the sleep of a pure child, after an active day; a sleep, not of passionate guilt, but of glorious innocence; a sleep, not of exhaustion and enfeeblement, but of recuperation and power. Jonah woke to

fall a victim to the storm; Christ, to conquer it. Christians will sleep like Christ, though all the fiercest storms of life may rage around them.

I can see the disciples questioning whether to wake the Master.

"What could He do," asked Thomas, "if we did wake Him? We must all go to the bottom together."

"He needs the sleep," said John. "He is all worn out, and He must not be disturbed."

"But He has great power," Andrew reminded them. "Remember the widow's son at Nain. If He can raise the dead, He can quiet the storm."

"I'm going to wake Him," Peter declared, "and there's not a minute to lose."

Thereupon Peter pushed through the huddled company of men, holding on to mast and spar and rope as the boat pitched and tossed, then bent over Jesus and shouted, "Master! Save us! We're perishing! Don't you care? Wake up, Master, and save us!"

Until recently there was in Boston a noble old artist-poet, Darius Cobb, who moved among us as a reminder of the older days of American art. He was a profound Christian, and he cherished a life-long ambition to paint a picture of Christ stilling the tempest. He made many studies, but I think he would have said that he had not yet reached his ideal of the matchless scene. He intended the picture to be a protest against the too common effeminacy in the pictures of Christ.

In Mr. Cobb's painting the God-man is standing in the storm, and power seems darting from His majestic, outstretched arm as He says to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

We all have need of Christ's rebuke, "Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?" For every Christian should so build up his trust during the seasons of fair weather that when the tempests come he will meet them with a smile, and even fall asleep amid the storm.

LXX

WHAT MOSES MISSED, AND DID NOT MISS

IS Mount Pisgah a symbol of defeat, or of victory? There are these two views of Moses' last hours on earth. Some think of them as very sad. He had led his people to the borders of the Promised Land, but his sin of presumption kept him from entering that land himself. He was a hundred and twenty years old, but his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated. He could have marched against Jericho and Ai with the best of them. Now he must resign his command to a subordinate, and see the revered Ark and the sacred Tabernacle pass on without him, and his beloved people move forward and leave him behind. What a glorious figure would Moses have been, conquering Canaan! How completely he would have done the work, leaving no heathen tribes to be the undoing of his people! How he would have established the state in righteous laws and firmly ordered its affairs! The whole history of Israel would have been changed for the better, very likely, if Moses could have crossed the Jordan.

But the other view of Mount Pisgah makes it the symbol of a Christian's triumphal death. According to this view Canaan is no forbidden land, but the heaven to which the enfranchised spirit is immediately to pass. Jordan is not a harsh and impassable barrier, but a narrow stream easily forded by the pilgrims. "Pisgah views" are foregleams of the glory and blessedness that shall be.

Which view fits the case of Moses?

Decidedly, the last!

For though the great leader did not enter Canaan in

the flesh, who will doubt that he entered it in the spirit?

I think I see him with the foremost of the priests, as the waters of the Jordan fall back before their advance.

I think I see him leading the host on the seven-day circuit of Jericho.

I think I see him marching against Hebron by the side of doughty old Caleb.

I think I see his majestic figure smiting Gibeon amid the hailstones, on that day when the sun and the moon stood still.

And I think that when the Tabernacle was set up at Shiloh, and when the words of the law resounded from Gerizim and Ebal, Moses was among the leaders of the rejoicing host, no less really because he was unseen.

I cannot conceive of a life spent so devotedly and effectively for one object through a century immediately cut off from that object, nor can I believe that Moses' descent upon the Mount of Transfiguration was his first acquaintance with the land of his long desire.

And so Mount Pisgah, the symbol of our looks ahead at the end of life, is to me a glorious symbol. It stands not for exclusion but for admission, not for the end of achievement but the beginning of the highest activity. We shall labour on, to better purpose than before; we shall enjoy the thrill of leadership and victory; we shall lose nothing of our earthly life that is worth keeping, but shall find it all, enriched and strengthened and beautified, in the Canaan to which we go.

LXXI

THE TOWN THAT MISSED ITS CHANCE

OF all the towns on earth, all that are or ever have been, Nazareth in Galilee came the nearest to supremacy, and missed it.

Bethlehem's fame as the birthplace of the Messiah is secure, and its situation at the extreme south of the Holy Land caused its glory to end with that great event.

Capernaum is associated with our Lord by marvellous miracles and wonderful parables, and by the fact that it became, if not His abiding-place, at least such home as He had, and the starting point of His journeys. But this association seems fortuitous. So far as the city itself is concerned, it might as well have been Bethsaida, or Chorazin, or Cana.

Jericho is connected with our Lord merely by virtue of His passing through it, and meeting Bartimæus and Zacchæus there. Bethany was His resting-place, but not His dwelling-place. Even Jerusalem, the city of His brooding love, was the scene only of His transient visits, and more than counterbalanced its triumphal reception by its awful crucifixion.

But Nazareth! the home of Mary and Joseph, the scene of the annunciation, the place of the carpenter-shop, the boyhood home of Jesus, the village where He went to school and to church, and where He roamed the fields and climbed the hills and found out parables, the abiding place of our Lord for nine-tenths of His life on earth,—Nazareth, as the one town most intimately associated with Jesus, had the best of all chances to win undying glory from that association.

Think what might have happened. Suppose the breth-

ren of our Lord had believed in Him, all of them, from the start. Suppose they had called their kindred from Capernaum, Peter and John and Andrew and James. Suppose they had transformed that carpenter-shop into a school of the prophets, in session for ten years instead of three.

And suppose that the circle of disciples had widened until it included all the young men and young women of the town; and then reached out and taken in all their fathers and mothers, and the rulers of the synagogues, and the village rabbi. And suppose that some glad day the entire population of the little village had jubilantly declared itself Christian.

That would have been a start greater than Christianity had won by the end of Christ's life. Cana would have heard of it. Capernaum would have heard of it. The news would speedily have passed to Nain and Gadara. No one can guess what would have happened, or how the entire course of Christian history might have been changed, if Nazareth had not missed its chance.

But the chance was missed. One of the most tragically prophetic scenes in all history is the picture of that village mob casting out of Nazareth the world's Redeemer. See! they would throw Him over the precipice, but they are awed by the sudden out-flashing of His majesty. Their tumultuous ranks part before Him as the foam of the sea before a striding giant, and Jesus has sadly exchanged Nazareth for Capernaum. Nazareth has lost its chance, and Capernaum has not gained it.

For each city, and each man, has its own peculiar opportunity, which may be accepted or rejected, but never passed on to others.

LXXII

ZERUBBABEL IS FORTUNATE IN HIS FOES

MANY have thought that it was a big blunder for Zerubbabel and his associates to refuse the help that was offered them for the building of the Temple. Really, that refusal helped Zerubbabel and his people in the best possible way.

There is no doubt that genuine aid was needed. They were a band of returned exiles, poor and weak. They had the favour of Cyrus, or at least his permission to do what they were doing; but Cyrus was far away. They were few in number, and were surrounded by a population who might easily annihilate them, and whom they had every reason to placate. Though it was their ancestral fatherland, they were strangers in it, and these possible enemies were thoroughly at home.

Moreover, the offered help was presented in such a way that it was hardest to refuse it. "You are building a temple to Jehovah," said these naturalized Babylonians and other heathen who had been introduced into Samaria to take the place of the captive and exiled Hebrews. "Let us build with you, for He is our God also. We have worshipped Him ever since we were brought to this land of His." Under the circumstances, it was difficult to refuse this proffered co-operation. To refuse would seem ungracious, discourteous, and rash in the extreme.

And yet it was the best of wisdom. For these were heathen at heart, however much they might worship Him whom they doubtless regarded as the local deity of their new home, to be appeased with the other gods of their pantheon. And the Hebrews, once for all, had

had enough of idolatry and idolaters. They did not propose to repeat at the very outset of their new national existence the sin which had been the Hebrews' peril and ruin ever since Joshua failed to destroy the Canaanites wholly, and the contagion of idol-worship had been allowed in the land. Therefore, the stern refusal was made, the gauntlet was thrown down, and the bitter enmity thus aroused plagued the returned exiles for many years.

A thousand congratulations, Zerubbabel, on those enemies! Let them send their lying messages to Persia. Let them carry on court intrigues. Let them hinder the Temple-building. It is better to worship under the open sky forever, with the worship as pure as that sky, than to set up the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place and Baal in the courtyard of the finest temple on earth.

And would, Zerubbabel, that we had a thousand rulers like you for the great cities of America! They would scorn the aid of grafters and selfish demagogues and political tricksters in the building of our capitols and city halls. They would dare to stand alone rather than be backed by an army of thieves. They would defy slander and misrepresentation and open hostility to do their worst. They would have but one purpose, to be true to their divine trust; and they would accept no ally not equally true. They would make foes by the thousand, perhaps by the hundred thousand; but they would not care, for they would make one Friend.

LXXIII

WHEN FOOD BECAME FORCE

FOOD always becomes force when it really feeds, but it does not always feed; often it only ferments.

In all the history of eating there is no food that so mightily became force as the bread and wine of the Last Supper.

It was only a flat cake of unleavened bread, and the cheap, common grape-juice of Palestine. It was only a bite and a sup. But it has become the flesh and blood of all true royalty ever since, the sap of imperial thinking, the fiber of masterful action. And it has been multiplied far more than the boy's luncheon that fed five thousand, for it has fed the world through nineteen centuries.

Can we imagine how this could be?

Food becomes force according to the food itself, whether it is pure and nutritious or the reverse; and also according to the body that receives it, whether the organs are all working well. Not the finest food can become force in an outraged, diseased body.

But the food distributed over the world from the table of the Last Supper, the bread that was Christ's body and the wine that was His blood, entered then and has entered ever since into bodies that are thrall to death, with no health in them. The food is pure and strong, perfectly and wonderfully pure and strong; but how, without a miracle, can it become force, under such untoward circumstances?

It cannot.

Not that we must accept the clumsy, crude, materialistic miracle of the Roman Catholic transubstantiation.

There is not the slightest reason for thinking that the flesh and blood of our Lord would be force in us any more than bread and grape-juice. It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profiteth nothing.

And yet whenever we partake of the communion bread and wine we celebrate a miracle, the most marvellous of all miracles, the miracle of a food that so transforms the body that receives it that it can become a force in that body, however weak and foul the body was before.

"Take me," the teacher says, as with patience and painstaking he seeks to build up his pupil's intellect; and the quiet, thoughtful offer makes the pupil a scholar.

"Take me," the maiden says, when she yields herself to her lover; and the lovely gift continually tends to transform him into its own loveliness.

"Take me," the mother says, bending over her baby; and affection and obedience and reverence take root in the child's unconscious nature out of the mother's bestowing nature.

"Take, eat," said our Lord. "This is my body, broken for you. Drink ye all: this is my blood, shed for you. This food is myself, all of me, freely, fully; take me and have me for yourself."

And, as the teacher and the lover and the mother transform by their gifts, so that the food they offer creates an environment that can use it as a force, though often the process is imperfect and often it sadly fails, so, always perfectly, always surely, the reception of Christ involves the incorporation of Christ. Like all of Christ's miracles, this miracle of the communion table has its interpreting but lesser counterparts in our daily lives.

LXXIV

THE PROCESSION OF THE SONS PASSES BY

WE are not to judge harsh judgments, unkind judgments, proud and passionate judgments; but none the less this is a world of judgments: Jesse's sons are daily and everywhere passing before Samuel.

It is a charming picture the Bible gives us of the country village, stirred to almost a frenzy of fear and trembling at the sudden visit of the awe-inspiring prophet, the elders of the place standing forth before the terrified peasants, the hurried preparations for the sacrifice, and Jesse's summons of his seven sons at Samuel's command.

They came hastily in from the field, some grumbling at the interruption of business for religion, some full of curiosity, some with shrewd guesses at the tremendous import of the invitation; for did not every one in the land know how this Samuel had made Saul king? And if one farmer's son, why not another?

Then the procession began, seven fine, strapping young men, one after the other, clean, handsome, strong, good to look upon, a difficult choice among them.

Eliab, the oldest. Tall and imposing, surely the chosen king, the Lord's anointed. But no; as Samuel looked upon the young man the inner voice was silent.

Abinadab, the second in age. Another noble young man, every inch a prince. No, again; Samuel had no impulse to anoint him.

Shammah, the third son. Vigorous, bright-eyed, alert; certainly the right one now. Not at all; God had not spoken to His prophet.

Thus the fourth, and the fifth, and the sixth, and the seventh. All worthy, in outward appearance; and all rejected.

Samuel was perplexed. Was he out of touch with God's will? Terrible thought! Had he made some mistake in it all? Should the procession pass again, and more slowly?

But a sudden thought occurred to Samuel. "Are these all the sons you have?" No, Jesse had still another, but *he* did not count, only a boy, tending sheep.

"Only a boy? Send and fetch him! We will not sit down till he comes!"

Yes, he was only a boy; but such a boy! His face was aglow with ruddy health, and beautiful with inner intelligence. He was not tall, but he was indeed a goodly sight: and at once the inner voice said to Samuel, "Anoint him, for this is the chosen king."

Jesse's sons, I said, are everywhere and all the time passing before Samuel. Continually the Lord by His prophets is taking measure of the sons of men, rejecting some, accepting others, and placing upon the brows of a few the anointing oil of a supreme consecration.

And these choices are not according to the judgment of the world; so that if we know how the world judges, we may be sure that the Lord's choice is elsewhere. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

On the outward appearance. On age, below or above the "dead line." On comeliness. On self-confidence and self-pushing. On fine clothes and fine manners. As to organizations, on numbers, and prestige, and big names, and loud advertising.

But when Samuel comes, the choice may fall upon the boy or the girl, upon the quiet, unnoticed worker, upon the Christian of humble self-giving, upon the organization that is aggressive only against the kingdom of Satan. For the Lord can always discern His Davids.

LXXV

EDOMITES IN THE MANGER

THE Edomites, dwelling south of Canaan and south of the Dead Sea, were blood-kindred of the Israelites, having Esau for their ancestor. Therefore the Israelites, when they reached their country on their march to Canaan, confidently expected permission to go through it.

Yet the words of Moses, through his messenger, were so pleading as to imply a knowledge of the churlish nature of the Edomites, and the possibility of a refusal. Moses reviewed the trials of his people in Egypt and the wonderful story of their escape; and then he promised that, if allowed to pass through Edom, they would do no harm to the fields and vineyards and wells, and would keep strictly to the highways, and would even pay for the water they might need for themselves and their cattle. Then came the curt reply, famous in the annals of ugliness, "Thou shalt not go through"; and this was followed up with still more ungenerous action, the muster of an army that held back the Israelites with the sword.

Moses had no desire to try conclusions with his unkind kindred. The battle, even if successful, would weaken his forces, and Idumæa was not the country he was to conquer. That savage region was far from being the promised land. Therefore, sorely disappointed, the Israelites turned eastward, and the entrance to Canaan was finally made through the land of Moab.

Thus began the age-long quarrel between the Israelites and the Edomites, a quarrel that led to constant wars, to increasing bitterness, and to much loss of men and treasure on both sides. What rivers of tears were shed,

what agonies were endured by wives and daughters, what anxieties were caused, what property lost, what mutilation and death! And all of this, multiplied by the centuries, because the Edomites, at the very beginning of Hebrew national history, played the dog in the manger!

"Live and let live" is as good a motto for nations as for individuals. Profit-giving is as much the life of commerce as profit-taking. "Put yourself in his place" is a worthy maxim for diplomats. "Blood is thicker than water" holds for international relations as for personal relations.

Gradually, surely, the spirit of Edom is passing from the world. Hague conferences and League of Nations are driving it out. World-wide travel is banishing it, and the reading of many books. The post-office and the telegraph and the radio, the railroad and the steamship and the aeroplane are rendering every Edomite an anachronism.

Most of all, Christ is opening up every Edom. Christianity will have no closed gates, no locked doors, no hermit nations. "I stand at the door, and knock," says the Master; at the door of churlish nations as well as at the closed door of the heart.

Let your brother in! Entrance, free and rejoicing, for your Elder Brother, and with Him all your human brothers of the earth! And as they come in bid them heartily welcome to all you have and to all you are.

LXXVI

A DIFFERENCE THAT DID NOT BECOME A DIVISION

IT was indeed a difference, deeply rooted in basal characteristics of human nature. The radical stood over against the conservative, tradition opposed innovation, the "standpat" feared the "insurgent."

There was a fine chance for the founding of the first Christian sect, the establishment of the first Christian schism.

As always in such cases there were profound bases of union. Both parties believed in Christ and in all the essentials of His gospel. Both parties desired to follow Christ's command and go into all the world, preaching the gospel to every creature. Both parties rejoiced that this gospel had been preached to the Gentiles, and that in so large numbers and with an eagerness so promising they had accepted it. Having these bonds, it would seem that nothing could separate them.

Moreover, both parties had had the same training. Both were reared in the Pharisaic rigours. Both held to the law and were proud of their birthright in Abraham. And yet it was this very matter that was in question.

Here were, on the one hand, certain of the Pharisees that had become Christians, and they urged that Paul's Greek converts should receive in the flesh the mystic seal of circumcision, weighted with historical significance and full of symbolic meaning. Moreover, they insisted that these Greek Christians, for their own safeguarding from the evils of idolatry out of which they had so lately emerged, should buttress themselves with the strict

Pharisaic regimen, and become Jews to the letter as well as in the spirit.

Paul, on the other hand, of the strictest sect of the Pharisees, educated at the feet of Gamaliel, the erstwhile fierce persecutor of the Christians because of these very rules; and Barnabas, equally strenuous in the faith; and Peter, who had never defiled himself with meat that was common or unclean till bidden by a command from the opening heaven,—these three are found urging that the Greek Christians should be relieved from the heavy yoke of Pharisaic strictness, which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear, and that the church should humbly accept the certification of the Holy Spirit, receiving to its heart those whom the Spirit had manifestly received to His great heart of love.

Denominations by the score have been established on differences less potent than this. Denominations by the score, in this good year of grace, are parted from their brethren by differences far less momentous.

In every church in Christendom should be placed some tablet in honour of James, the Apostle of Common Sense. He it was who, by healing the first schism, saved—humanly speaking—the church of Christ on earth; for what could have saved it if it had begun thus early to split up into warring sects?

His solution was perfectly simple—to Christians, and perfectly impossible—to sectarians. He proposed that each side should yield a little, in order that they might get together. The strict constructionists were to yield circumcision. The loose constructionists were to yield their freedom in the matter of eating meat offered to idols and animals that had been strangled, and dishes made of blood, and they were to remain free from sensual impurity. This agreement was cannily put into writing, and the first church council was over.

Now if we could only have a similar church council for the settlement of the differences of the one hundred

and sixty-eight Christian sects of the United States! Paul and James and Peter and Barnabas would all be there, with the all-wise Spirit of Union Himself. And He would lead the way, as ever, into all truth; for the truth is one, and unifying.

LXXVII

THE LEPERS BRING GOOD NEWS

WHAT infamy is greater than to keep good news from those to whom it belongs?

One of the most dramatic scenes in all the Bible, that dramatic volume, has for its central figures four lepers.

The wretched men were in the habit of sitting at the gate of Samaria, begging food from the passers-by. But Samaria was beset by a great host of Syrians, and there was no passing by: all the inhabitants were shut up in the besieged city. Moreover, even if these outcasts dared to enter the gates, they would find only famine within. And so, one early dawn, in their extremity they decided to go to the encompassing Syrian tents. "If they kill us, we shall but die; and we shall die here."

But when they crossed the valley and came to the Syrian camp, lo! there was no sentry on guard. They stole forward cautiously and peeped into the first tent. There was just light enough to see that it was empty. To the second tent, to another and another; all empty. Stillness as of the grave on the great encampment, but no bodies of men. Horses tethered in one place, asses tied in another place, chariots ranged yonder, but no drivers for the chariots, and no riders to man them. For the Lord, in answer to Elisha's prayer and in confirmation of his prophecy, had inspired among the Syrians one of those frantic outbursts of infectious terror that so often at-

tack the undisciplined and superstitious forces of the East, and they had fled pell-mell the night before, leaving all their goods behind.

There was a chance for four starving, poverty-stricken, despised lepers! I enjoy the very thought of them, feasting upon the good things they found in superb abundance, and gathering up glorious armfuls of silver and gold vessels and rich raiment, carrying it off to a cave in the hills where they were wont to find the shelter denied them in the abodes of their fellows, and going again and again, their poor bodies fired with excitement and their sad souls aglow with at least the hope of coming comfort.

I am almost sorry to hear one of them call a halt; and yet he spoke well and wisely: "This is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace. Let us go to the city and tell the king."

To be sure, a prudential motive was interwoven: if they were caught collecting spoil and keeping their secret they would surely be punished, and their hoard would be taken from them; and yet we may be sure that a nobler motive was at the bottom of that brotherly speech. It was a summons to unselfishness, and it was not spoken in vain even to those toward whom a pitiless community had been so cruelly selfish.

It is a word that all of us need, lepers and whole, popular and scorned, weak and powerful. For each one of us may light upon something that will minister to the need of the world. Indeed, every one of us that owns a Bible, and prays, and knows Christ, has found a treasure compared to which all the food and wealth of that deserted Syrian camp are but as gravel. Shall we gather it up in our arms and hide it in our selfish caves, or shall we hasten on our happy feet and carry the good news to the city?

LXXVIII

HOW CERTAIN WOMEN WENT INTO PEACE

AMONG the many intimate facts concerning Jesus that we should be eager to know, if John or Peter were subject to our interrogation, is the way in which He and His disciples were supported. The sons of Zebedee could no longer fish, nor Matthew collect taxes, nor Christ make yokes. Paul had an occupation more capable of transportation, and yet even he could seldom remain in one place long enough to build up a trade in tents.

And Christ was poor. He had no place to lay His head. Joseph's family was large, and He was only a village carpenter. His disciples, too, were probably all poor men. Zebedee had hired servants, but he would be obliged to hire still other helpers after his sons left him, and he would hardly be able to support them in their wanderings. Immediately after the crucifixion we find them back at their old trade of fishing. Later, we see Peter obliged to help a tanner in his despised business. Matthew may have saved something from his unholy calling, but, like Zacchæus, he would restore all he could to those whom he had wronged. John had a home to which he could take Mary, but it was doubtless a humble one. When it became necessary to pay the slight Temple tax (about forty cents), our Lord was obliged to work a miracle to obtain it. Thirty pieces of silver (less than twenty dollars) sufficed to buy for unutterable treason the treasurer of the Twelve.

Our Lord and His followers being thus poor, it is of extreme interest to note almost the only hint we have of the way their few wants were supplied,—the little they needed to eat, with an occasional shelter. No coal to buy,

no costly clothes discarded with the flitting fashions, no elaborate menu, no servants in the kitchen and stenographers and telephones in the office, no automobiles and chauffeurs for them! A single day's living of many a modern Christian family would easily meet all the needs of Jesus and the Twelve for those three years. But even this little must be provided, and how was it done?

Luke, the careful, alone tells us. Certain women, he says, went with Jesus on His preaching tours. They were women whom He had healed in body or soul or both; and he instances Mary of Magdala, Joanna from the court of Herod Antipas, and Susanna. Joanna's husband Chuza, Herod's steward, some have thought to be the nobleman whose son was healed at Capernaum; at any rate, Chuza heard of the miracle. Mary is thought by many to have been the sinning woman who anointed Christ's feet at the house of Simon the Pharisee, about whom Luke wrote in the sentences immediately preceding. "Thy faith hath saved thee," said our Lord to her; "go into peace."

At any rate, it was thus that Mary and Joanna and Susanna and the other women went "into peace." They found peace by ministering to Jesus, who had so wonderfully ministered to them. They found peace by helping Jesus minister to others that needed to have the devils and the fevers and the leprosy cast out of them. Women were so despised in the East that the very presence of these women must have brought many a taunt upon our Lord and the Twelve; their motives were doubtless misconstrued and they themselves subjected to many indignities. And yet, wherever they went with Jesus, they went "into peace."

Do they not show us also the road, out of our devil-haunted fears and frets and turmoil, into the peace that the world cannot give us, the peace that the world cannot take away?

LXXIX

A GOD IS STONED

IT was as when, after casting palm-branches before Jesus and welcoming Him to Jerusalem as a conqueror and sovereign, the fickle populace joined in the Pharisees' cry, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

So Paul at Lystra, having healed the cripple, was immediately hailed as a god. Like Jupiter and Mercury who had in the mythical days visited Baucis and Philemon near by, these godlike strangers had come among them, the Jovian Barnabas, and Paul, silver-tongued as the herald Mercury. Therefore the priest of the temple of Jupiter at the city gate made all preparations to sacrifice to them, and the people were all ready to join in the impious ceremony.

Here was a temptation for ambitious men, as the triumphal entry would have been a temptation for an ambitious Christ. Graciously accept the sacrifice, and what a career of ease and influence and power was open before them! They could lead Lystra as they would. Could they not then lead Lystra to the foot of the cross?

Ah, no! It was no temptation to the level-headed Paul. Not by any exaltation of the disciple can the Lord be exalted. Not by sacrificing to man can the way be discerned to the Lamb that was sacrificed before man was created.

Paul's indignant protest, his stern denial, his quiet course of teaching afterward, furnished the ready soil for persecution,—such a soil as Jesus furnished when, after the triumphal entry, He drove the money-changers from the Temple, and then quietly taught in the purified courts. People would rather be impious than be proved

fools, and the people of Lystra had been proved fools.

Therefore when the spiteful Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, they found it easy to raise a mob against Paul. "He is an impostor!" they cried. "He is a blasphemer, a corrupter of public morals, a dangerous man to have around! He is a traitor to Cæsar, and deserves to die!"

So they stoned Paul, and drew him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

With every stone that crashed against his tortured body what thoughts arose of Stephen, the faithful Christian whom he had joined to slay in the same cruel fashion! Indeed, I can imagine that Paul took a stern satisfaction in the awful anguish, seeing in it a requital of justice, a recompense for his former iniquities. At last, having suffered even as he had made others suffer, he had paid fitting penalty and satisfied the law of retribution.

But what a contrast is this scene to that which immediately precedes it in the chronicle! At first a god, then a criminal! Now supreme in honour, now an outcast! Yesterday the bestower of miraculous energy and health, to-day at the point of miserable death! And the same men, on the two contiguous days, bringing garlanded sacrifices and hurling pitiless stones!

Ever afterward, if not before, Paul must have estimated at its valueless value the clamour of popular applause. Ever afterward he must have sought the approval of God alone, and not of men. Ever afterward he must have seen the wisdom of labouring quietly with the few and not seeking to sweep the many triumphantly into the Kingdom. For the Kingdom of heaven is like a leaven, hidden; and it never comes with observation. The Kingdom must come with the Twelve before it can come with the three thousand; with Calvary before Pentecost. "Even so," in any way, in Thy way, "come, Lord Jesus!"

LXXX

CHRIST'S HEAVIEST TRIAL

WHAT was the heaviest trial of our Lord? The unbelief of men. That when He brought them priceless wealth, they scorned His gifts. That when He offered them health and joy, they preferred disease and misery. That when He would make them heirs of eternal life, they chose eternal death. To a loving, thinking being there can be no heavier trial than this.

And where was this heaviest trial most severe? Certainly in His own family, among His kindred of the flesh, those young folks with whom He had played in the fields and on the hillsides, joining in their studies and labours and bending with them at the same altar. These He must have been most eager to draw to His Father, and their rebuffs and denials must have touched Him most deeply.

Naturally, we see little of this in the Gospels. Christ had been driven from Nazareth to make His abode in Capernaum. The evangelists wrote of Christ's preaching tours, His teachings and miracles, His larger work. Even here they are continually omitting the little personal details that we should be so glad to know, in their eagerness to centre everything upon the Messiah.

But John, though he wrote his Gospel in Ephesus, and concerned Himself mainly with Judean events, yet introduces, as a by-the-way to explain Christ's tardiness at the great national feast of tabernacles in Jerusalem, a domestic scene in Nazareth the details of which he must have learned from one of Christ's brothers, possibly James, after they were converted.

We see the orthodox household preparing to make the

pilgrimage to the holy city. Jesus is there—an indication that even after removing to Capernaum He was often with His mother and His brothers. “Go with us to Jerusalem,” His brothers urge. “Let your disciples also see these miracles you are doing.”

Evidently Christ had performed some miracles in Nazareth; how He must have yearned over His own village, with all His beloved ones in it! Evidently also His brothers superciliously refused to count themselves among His disciples.

“Be open!” the young men go on to say—of all exhortations the most absurd to address to Him who was the Truth. “You will never be publicly known if you insist on doing these wonders in secret. If you claim to be the Messiah, show yourself as the Messiah to all the world at Jerusalem.”

Seldom has the philosophy of worldlings been better expressed. Of truth in secret, the leaven hid in the meal, they know nothing, can know nothing. For truth on parade, truth at the head of a procession, with colours flying and brass bands playing and cannon booming and crowds hurrahing, they have great respect. But of truth in the ground as a seed, of truth on the cross as a criminal, they have no conception. No wonder that His brothers did not believe on Christ.

Hear the quiet but absolutely decisive answer: “My time for this manifestation has not yet come, though your time for show is always ready. The world cannot hate you, for it does not hate its own; but it hates me, because I disclose the evil at the heart of it.”

What sarcasm is here, no less trenchant that the brothers were probably unaware of the thrust until, in the light of resurrection, they came to see the truth. But now they shrug their shoulders and trudge off to the feast, indulging in many a gibe, as they go, at the expense of the deluded “Messiah” they have left behind. Then later, quietly and alone, our Lord makes the journey; for

He has much to do and much to say at Jerusalem, and He knows what preparation is needful, and what companionship would render the journey a hindrance and not a help.

In which company would we be journeying, down to Jerusalem? in the company of those whom the world cannot hate, or in sad, solitary comradeship with Him whom the world will ever hate while its days are evil? The answer will tell us what we shall find at Jerusalem when we arrive there.

LXXXI

AN EXHILARATING HUNT

HOW I should like to have been present when the Jews of Berea, during that memorable first visit of Paul and Silas, "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so"!

They were probably not at all wealthy; very likely they were common labourers. They would meet after the day's work was done, doubtless in the evening. One or two of them would have copies of the Scriptures. The rest would have, at any rate, well-stored Biblical memories.

"He said," one would begin (and the "he" was always Paul), "that this Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea."

"That marches with Micah, neighbour," another would speak up. "How goes it?—'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, out of thee shall come forth the ruler'—just how does it run?"

And the great verse from Micah's prophecy would be found and read.

"But Paul says that Jesus lived most of his life in Nazareth, and that was one reason why he was so scorned by the scribes and Pharisees."

"Yes, but it was prophesied that he should be 'despised and rejected of men.' Read us the Servant portion of Isaiah, won't you?"

Then the great sentences would be read, beginning with Isa. 52:13 and running through all of chapter 53.

"'He opened not his mouth'—Paul says that Jesus made no defence at his trial, though the governor himself declared him innocent."

"Yes, but that place, 'He made his grave with the wicked,'—how does that fit in with this Jesus, who was so holy?"

"Why, don't you remember what Silas told us about his being crucified with the two robbers, one on either side of him?"

"O yes! and I remember, too, what Silas went on to say about the rest of it, 'with the rich in his death,' how Jesus' body was laid in a new tomb owned by a rich man of Jerusalem."

"Why, neighbours, it seems to fit all around. Let us hear some of the other prophecies. What was that Psalm about not leaving his soul in death? Can you find it? Read it out plainly, brother, for I'm getting a little deaf in my old age."

That is the way in which these shrewd Bereans must have searched the Scriptures. How fresh it all was to them, and how inspiring! It was as when the villagers in Italy and Spain began to hear marvellous tales of the new world discovered by Columbus. It was as when the telescope began to reveal to startled men the wonders of the starry universe, and the microscope to unfold the equal wonders of the universe of little things, and geology to lead men's hesitating feet backward, far, far backward along the dim corridors of time. They had all the thrill and romance of pioneers, these searchers in Berea.

Can we not catch their enthusiasm? Can we not throw off the apathy of stupid familiarity, and make for ourselves the same discoveries that they made?

Yes, and more, far more! For we have the crowning of the Bible, which they lacked. To be sure, they had Paul in the flesh, but only for a few days, and poorly understood at that. We have much more of Paul than they had. And we have John and Matthew and Mark and Luke and James and Jude and Peter, and, very likely, Apollos thrown in for good measure.

The Berean search of the Scriptures should be child's play compared to ours.

Boot and saddle, sound the bugle, and off to the hunt!

LXXXII

CHRIST'S SUPREME MIRACLE—BY THE WAY

WE are constantly impressed, in reading the Gospels, with the compression of the narrative.

Here are world-shaking events, marvels of wisdom and power, mysteries of insight, glories of beauty and radiance of love, such as the world had never seen before and would never see again. Here are wonders overtopping science, and achievements that surpass all the accomplishments of mankind. And yet the greatest of them will be packed into a paragraph.

If Darwin or Huxley had by a long lifetime of study become able to take a single blossom, packed full of potential life, and without the fertilizing pollen cause it to grow into a fruit, libraries would be written upon the discovery, and the scientist would be exalted chief of human beings. But with all our search for the mystic talisman, no man has yet been able to transmute inert matter into living, growing, fructifying matter. It is the goal of all ages of thought, and as far away, perhaps, as ever.

But, though the Creator may never place this key to life in the hands of created beings, there was One who used it naturally, easily, and freely. He drew it from His bosom at any time, as if casually, turned the lock, threw open the door, and invited departed spirits back again. This life by the way, this unconscious and almost haphazard exertion of supreme power, is to me the most remarkable phenomenon of Christ's existence among men.

It is illustrated, and perhaps nowhere better, in the account of the raising of the widow's son at Nain.

Except that nothing in the universe is accidental, one would call Christ's meeting that humble funeral procession an accident. He and His disciples "happened" to be going to Nain, and as He was mounting the ascent near the town He "chanced" to meet this sad little company going down with their lamentable burden.

The chief mourner was a woman. She was alone; she was a widow. No young man or even boy walked by her side to comfort her; the body of the young man borne on the open bier was that of her only son. All this was evident at a glance, and hardly needed even a question of the pitying townsfolk.

Luke's Gospel is very tender to women, as the physician's Gospel should be; but in all Luke's Gospel there is no sweeter verse than this, "When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not."

Here is no cold philosophy, arguing down the unreasonableness of grief. Here is no obstinate fatalism. Here is no blind mysticism, denying the reality of sorrow and death. Here is the one Christian cure for all grief, sympathy.

It was compassion, notice everywhere, that drew Christ's miracles out of Him. They had no system. They were not planned. Christ would have avoided them, if He could, for they drew attention from the spirit to the flesh, from the essentials of His message to the inciden-

tals of His personality. But He could not endure unmoved the woes of His brothers and sisters.

It is as if Christ would say to us, "These sicknesses of yours, these physical lacks of food and raiment and shelter, these storms on the sea, these empty nets, and even the pitiful still form on the bier, are nothing in themselves, or I would spend my time upon them, and lavish upon them all of my power. When you bring them to me, I must help you, for I love you so; but it is all only a by-the-way. I do not blame you for not seeing it so now, but some day you will see. Till then, believe me, the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak to you, *they* are the life."

LXXXIII

NAAMAN WOULD KEEP HIS SITUATION

NAAMAN was a proud man, though he was a leper. He was a great general, and had won many battles for the king of Syria. He was offended when Elisha did not come out respectfully to meet him. He was offended when the Hebrew prophet merely sent him a prescription by his servant. He was offended most of all by the prescription itself,—to bathe in the muddy waters of the Jordan, he who lived by the clear and beautiful Abana and Pharpar! His servants, more sensible than he, were able with difficulty to persuade him to obey the uncivil physician.

Naaman was a proud man, but he was also a grateful one. Who could help being grateful when relieved of that horrible disease? There is no more talk of Elisha's incivility, but a long journey back to Samaria just to see him and try to force a present upon him. There is no more talk of the inferiority of the Jordan, but a humble

petition for two mules' burden of the soil of Israel, to make an altar-core in Damascus.

Naaman was a proud man, but he was not too proud to bow himself down in the idol-temple of the god Rimmon. Yes, though he acknowledged Jehovah to be the Lord, the only God, he would still continue to bow in the house of Rimmon. And he asked Elisha to obtain Jehovah's pardon for the deed.

You see, this proud man knew on which side his bread was buttered. He would keep his new-found faith, but he would also keep his situation. The king of Syria would bow in the house of Rimmon, and it would be necessary for Naaman to attend his royal master. It was a very practical dilemma.

What did Elisha say to this remarkable proposal? He said nothing. I think he only smiled—a pitying, scornful smile. His reply was merely, “Go in peace.” Perhaps Elisha hoped that, having seen so far, he would come to see farther. Perhaps Elisha thought that any one who could make so craven a suggestion could not respond to a more heroic mood. Anyway, he merely said, “Good-by!”

We know what Elisha would have done in the house of Rimmon. No marble pillar in the temple with so inflexible a backbone as his would have been! Situation? Elisha had no situation except to speak God's word and do God's will. Bread, with butter on the right side of it? Elisha was wearing Elijah's mantle, and he had not forgotten the ravens, nor the widow's meal-jar.

Few scenes so modern as this in all the Bible, modern book as the Bible is. For society to-day is, for the most part, a vast house of Rimmon. And modern men are too often Naamans, cleansed of their leprosy, grateful for the cleansing, but desiring permission still to bend, on occasion, before the gods of this world.

Naaman was a great man, a proud man; he had a king for his friend; he had wealth and a following, and an

army at his back. But the world knows him to-day solely because of those few minutes he spent with Elisha, with the man whose backbone knew where to bend and where to remain erect.

LXXXIV

MOSES' ROD FOR OTHERS BECOMES A ROD FOR HIMSELF

JUST what happened at Kadesh that barred Moses from the promised land is not entirely clear. Something seems to be lacking from the account; perhaps this something was so well known that it was omitted; perhaps it is only that we do not understand fully what is set down.

At any rate, this is clear, that the people murmured at Kadesh, being afflicted with that worst of all physical afflictions, the absence of water. Not starvation, nor any other bodily evil, causes so terrible agony as extreme thirst. It is no wonder that the people, never very patient or wise, were thrown into a frenzy of despair.

But there was no reason whatever for their chiding Moses. They upbraided their great, unselfish leader like a set of whining children: "Why did you *make us* go up out of Egypt?" As if they had not been glad enough to leave that land of awful bondage!

Then, when Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the Lord in an agony of supplication, Jehovah answered with a promise that Moses should speak to a certain well-known rock in the presence of the people, and water would gush forth for their need.

But Moses did not speak to the rock; he spoke to the people. "Hear now, ye rebels," he cried passionately, "must we fetch you water out of this rock?" And then he smote the rock twice with his rod, the same rod that

had worked the marvels in Egypt, and lo! the water came out abundantly.

What was there wrong in this, that because of it Moses should be condemned to die in the wilderness, deprived of his life's climax, withdrawn from his work at its height, with his eye not yet dim nor his natural force abated?

The answer given, and all the answer that is given, is this: because "he did not sanctify God in the eyes of the children of Israel."

That is, Moses made a personal matter of what was a matter for God alone. He was concerned with the affront to himself and forgot the affront to his Master. The people were "rebels" against him, not against Jehovah. They were showing base ingratitude to him, not to God. "Must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" he had cried, as if he, and not Jehovah, were doing it.

To be sure, Moses was greatly wronged, and it was natural that he should feel hurt; but the child of God should feel a wrong done to his Father so keenly that he quite forgets a wrong done to himself. God had shown Himself eager, on more than one occasion, to avenge the injured dignity of His servant Moses; but that was when the sole concern of Moses was to uphold the glory of God; when, as to himself, he was willing to be nothing, even to be blotted, if need be, out of the book of God. At the water of Meribah things were different.

As concerns Moses, the incident is closed. The world's chief lawgiver stands with Paul its chief philosopher at the summit of the honour-roll of mankind. The expiation has been made; God has forgiven and forgotten the water of Meribah.

So far as Moses is concerned, yes; but how about us? When we worry about precedence? When we rage at men's injustice? When we seek honour from men and would have them all speak well of us? When our speech is full of I's and forgets the great I AM? How in that case, can there be any promised land for us?

LXXXV

REBUKING GOD

OUR Lord called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites, but He called His own disciple Satan. And that disciple was not Judas the traitor or even Thomas the doubter, but it was Peter the zealous. Nor was it after Peter had denied Him, but immediately after Peter had confessed Him,—the first clear admission of His Messiahship that Jesus had received.

“Blessed art thou,” Christ had said to Peter. “This utterance of yours is of my Father. It is the rock on which I will build my church.” And within a few minutes he had turned indignantly to this rock-disciple and said: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me! Your thoughts come of man, and not of God.”

What had wrought the change? The cross, which effects so many sad as well as glorious transformations. The cross, which is the only final touchstone, separating the true gold of character from the false. The cross, which stands on the sharp border parting the kingdom of God from the kingdom of Satan.

Christ had not allowed His disciples to remain in the exaltation of His confessed Messiahship, with its anticipated glories of extended sway and royal power and grandeur. He had drawn aside the curtain of the future and shown a scene of darkness rather than of light, of sorrow rather than rejoicing, of ignominy rather than glory. He had shown, not a throne, but Calvary.

And Peter had taken Him aside for a lesson! It was the most impudent coaching the world has ever known. It was the most colossal exhibition of conceit in human

history. At one instant to cry, "Thou art the Son of the living God!" and at the next instant to rebuke Him!

"This is no way to play your part," said Peter. "What folly has entered your head? Crucified? Nonsense! Never! Talk of empire, not a cross."

How Christ would have dealt with Peter if the other disciples had not followed and been listening agape we cannot know; more gently, doubtless, for Peter's heart was sound, if his head was too elevated. But when He saw the other disciples, Christ knew that rebuke must be met by a sterner rebuke, a crushing and final rejoinder. Hard days were before them, days ever more difficult and trying, and they must be nerved to meet them. Men of the Kingdom must not dwell in a fool's paradise. Men of the Kingdom must not be ignorant of the Kingdom's fundamental constitution.

And so Christ, after His stinging reply to the officious disciple, called to Him the entire throng that was attending Him, that His announcement of the Kingdom's laws might reach as far as possible. And the laws were: self-denial, cross-bearing, loss of life.

The laws *are* self-denial, cross-bearing, loss of life. Christianity has become a great world religion, but it is hardly more popular than in A. D. 30. Still Pilate sits in his judgment-hall. Still Caiaphas rules the Sanhedrin. Still the mob cries "Crucify!" Crosses are still erected, and there are nails for the hands and feet.

And still Peter rebukes his God. Still—how often!—the Peter in each one of us finds fault with his Maker, and tells Him He is making a mistake, that virtue should always ride in a carriage if not an automobile, that righteousness should be at ease, that obedience and holiness should sit upon the thrones of this earth.

Let us be honest with ourselves, and fair to Peter. Is our life, in its innermost desires, its hopes and its expected rewards, yet founded upon the constitution of the kingdom of God?

LXXXVI

PETER GETS HIS MARCHING-ORDERS

PETER was the brass-band disciple. He liked the parade, the procession, flags flying, swords and spears glittering, drums booming and trumpets shrilling. "Forward, march!" was his watchword. He might have said before Livingstone, "Anywhere, so it be forward!"

Apologists for Judas have conjectured that the infamous disciple was not so infamous after all, that he was merely in a hurry, that he only desired to force the Messiah to exert His power, manifest His glory, burst through the narrowing ranks of His enemies, and seat Himself upon the throne of His rightful sovereignty. For that reason, these defenders foolishly allege in the face of the evident contrary opinion of his contemporaries, Judas betrayed Jesus to His foes; and then, when he saw that his plans had failed, in his despair went out into the darkness and killed himself.

With far more reason, it seems to me, may this same course of arguing be applied to Peter's denial. We know that Peter was the disciple in a hurry, and we do not know this of Judas. We know that Peter was the one that was first to proclaim Christ's Messiahship, and the first to protest against the cross. We know that Peter was first to assert his readiness to face all armies for his Lord, that he was the disciple that bare the sword, and that he even dared to swing that headstrong weapon against Malchus's ear.

And then, when the ear was healed, so tamely as Peter must have thought, and when the Lord of heaven and earth quietly allowed himself to be led away as an ordinary criminal by a handful of the hated Roman soldiers

and a little mob of clamouring Pharisees, Peter's indignation and despair burst all bounds.

He followed—he alone, probably—and watched to see the expected outburst of supernatural power. Would He pull the palace down upon His enemies like Samson? Would He blast them with a flash of lightning? Would He stretch out His hand over them as once over the tossing waves of Gennesaret, and awe them to a trembling peace at his feet?

But nothing of the kind happened. No brass band, no banner, no marching for Peter. They spit on the Messiah. They mock Him and buffet Him. And the heavens are silent, and the Messiah suffers it all. Can we not imagine in what wrath and anguish of disappointment the marching disciple, when taunted with being Jesus' follower, began to curse, and swore, "I do not know him"?

There came a time, soon after, when Peter got his marching orders; and how different they were from those that he had expected! They came, not in the presence of an army, but before seven of his intimate friends; and not in the crash of battle, but on a quiet morning by the Sea of Galilee. And they did not bid Peter to draw his sword and dash forward against the foe, but they gently commanded him, "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs." And that was the end of Peter's high ambition.

No, it was the beginning of it! For between the two scenes, in the courtyard of Annas and beside the sea, rose the cross of Christ. Peter had learned its lesson of all-conquering love. The sun of Easter had risen in his soul, and, all his boastings forgotten, he uttered humbly the newly learned password into the kingdom of heaven, "Thou knowest that I love Thee."

LXXXVII

THE DOUBLE MIRACLE

HOW we wish we might know the after-story of Christ's miracles!

What became of the bride and groom for whom our Lord worked His first miracle, turning water into wine at their wedding? Did the fragrant marvel consecrate their home, or did they live just like all the other families of Cana?

What was the history of the widow's son at Nain? Raised so wonderfully from the dead, did he spend his restored life in the service of Him who had given it back to him and his mother? Was he one of the founders of the early church, perhaps a glorified martyr? Or did he live a common, careless life and die a common, inglorious death?

Did the deaf-mute whom Christ healed become a preacher of the Glad Tidings? What did Bartimæus do with his opened eyes? How did the Gadarene demoniacs employ their recovered reason? Was Jairus's daughter more than an ordinary woman? These questions, and such as these, we shall ask eagerly some day, in the land where all hidden histories are disclosed.

At any rate, it is a sad fact that we have few, very few hints of gratitude among the beneficiaries of our Saviour's miraculous power. Mary Magdalene became His loving follower, but we are not told of any other healed person that attached herself or himself to our Lord's company. Sometimes, when He bade those restored not to tell others about it, they published the story far and wide; but that would seem to be, under the circumstances, more garrulity than gratitude.

So that the account of the ten lepers would appear to be quite typical of what took place during the three years of Christ's ministry. Ten men, all of them lepers! What a mass of misery! What long horrors of living death! What wanderings and rebuffs and hunger and cold and numbness of grief! What destitution of relatives, and what sorrow in their homes! Leprosy, that white scourge of the East, is always gruesome; but when ten lepers come together, and heap in one awful pile their loathsomeness and wretchedness, it is a sight at which the Sphinx herself might weep!

It is no wonder that Jesus took pity on them, as they stood afar off and cried, over and over: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! Have mercy on us!" I think that to the eyes of the pure, strong, unmarred Redeemer, the Creator of the perfect form of man, no sight could be so sad as that of a leper. It is no wonder that He bade them go and show themselves to the priests for their certificate of wholeness, and that as they went on their trusting journey they were healed.

That miracle, I say, is no wonder. It would have been a miracle, indeed, if the pitying Christ had *not* healed them. But the second miracle is the wonder,—that one of them, filled with gratitude, returned!

Where were the nine? They were hurrying to the priests, eager to make their escape sure, to get the legal seal upon their deliverance. Why did the tenth turn back? Because the Deliverer had come to mean more to him than the deliverance. Because his impulse to give glory to God was stronger than his impulse to get a health-certificate for himself.

"And he was a Samaritan." Shall we stand beside him on the judgment-day? Yes, if we add to the first miracle of our salvation the second miracle of our all-mastering gratitude.

LXXXVIII

BLIND ZEDEKIAH LOSES HIS EYES

HAD Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, any chance? He was ruler of a kingdom that was weakened by a thousand follies of his predecessors. His people were mad with idolatries. His own body and brain were probably seized with those subtle allurements in his boyhood. The law of God was forgotten. The priests of God were scorned. The temple was neglected or even prostituted to idol-worship. Nebuchadnezzar on the east was mighty with all the power of wealth and arms and organization. If ever a nation was marked for ruin and its sovereign for despair, that nation and sovereign were Judah and Zedekiah.

And yet I am sure that Zedekiah had a chance. Indeed, he had as good a chance as David or Solomon. If he had taken his chance, he would have shone in history above David with his great sin of murder, and Solomon with his great sin of idolatrous alliances.

What was that chance?

Simply that Zedekiah, with all his bad fortune and dark prospects, might have thrown himself wholly upon the mercies of Jehovah. He might have resolved that, whatever happened, he would be God's. He would be pure in body and mind. He would learn God's will and do it. He would strive in every way to tell God's will to his people and get them to observe it. There is nothing in this that he might not have done. That was his chance.

If Zedekiah had taken his chance, and his nation, would he and his nation have been saved?

Indubitably, yes. Perhaps not from captivity. Perhaps not from poverty and terror. Perhaps not from the

putting out of eyes and from cruel death. But they would have been saved.

The thief on the cross was saved, though he was crucified.

Paul the persecutor was saved, though he was beheaded.

David was saved, though to a life of trouble and sorrow.

Salvation is not in exteriors, never in exteriors, but in the heart.

And so it was a Zedekiah already blind that was led chained before Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. It was an already sightless Zedekiah that saw his children slain before his eyes. It was noblemen already blinded that were murdered there in Riblah. It was a blind nation that was carried captive into Babylon. Not till the people had been there for years did they begin to see.

Perhaps—very likely—Zedekiah never realized that he had been sightless for years before Nebuchadnezzar's pitiless spear was thrust into his eyeballs. Very likely he never knew that for years before he was carried off to Babylon he was nevertheless a captive. We cannot be sure of individuals, but we can be sure that the Hebrews, as a nation, learned the lesson.

It is a lesson worth learning above all other lessons, because it pierces to the realities of things. It draws us away from the passing to the enduring. It shows us the folly of building our houses of hope and affection upon the shifting sands of time. It teaches us that, dear as is the aspect of this fair world, there is a spiritual seeing that is beyond price more precious; and much as we love our earthly homeland, it is to be hated in comparison with the homeland of the soul.

LXXXIX

A MURDERER BECOMES A GOD

THE great apostle of the Gentiles was constantly attacked by serpents.

The malicious Jews were serpents, following him with their slander from city to city, and in one case almost procuring his death by stoning.

False brethren were serpents, creeping into the churches that he planted, and sowing there the seeds of poisonous doctrines and baneful dissensions.

The devil was a serpent, as from the beginning of the world, even creeping into Paul's heart, so that when he would do good evil was present within him.

The Romans were serpents, ever jealous of their power, ever suspicious of this new teaching that held an idol to be nothing, and an emperor to be a mere man and not a god. Those serpents finally slew the apostle.

And so that scene on the island of Malta after the shipwreck is typical of Paul's entire career as a Christian.

He was making himself useful, as we may be sure he always did, and he had just gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire to dry the shivering company escaped from the waves, when a deadly viper sprang out of the freshly kindled bundle, and fastened on his hand.

"He is a murderer!" said the awestruck Maltese on-lookers. "He has escaped the sea, but divine vengeance has overtaken him on land."

Paul calmly shook off the reptile into the fire, and felt none the worse for his fangs. Doubtless he remembered Christ's promise that His followers when about their duty should not be harmed even by poisonous serpents.

Then the Maltese, still watching him with their mouths open, looked to see him swell, or turn purple, or fall down in convulsions, or suddenly expire. They watched

him for a long time, whispering about him, and when nothing evil happened to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

Characteristic, was it not? of popular judgments everywhere. There is no room for the mean in popular judgments. A man is either a murderer, or a god, or—forgotten altogether. At Lystra Paul was first a god and then an outcast, and nearly murdered. In Malta he was first a murderer and then a god.

But the scene was also characteristic of Paul. In it he manifested some of his truly godlike attributes, though the Maltese had no eyes for them.

Quietness is godlike. God works in silence, usually. His penalties, even, fall upon men usually in stillness as of death. His approval is whispered within the heart. And the more of God is in a man the more calmly will he walk, the gentler will be his voice, the more restrained his movements. Paul's quietness by the viper-haunted fire was godlike.

Fearlessness is godlike. Jehovah cannot fear; neither can men, in proportion as God is in their souls. Their last enemy is slain, their last battle is fought. The sceptre of power has been placed in their hands. In the valley of the shadow of death they fear no evil, for God is with them.

Trust is godlike. It is godlike because it reaches up and lays hold on God and gains Him for our human lives. Paul would not have been godlike on the beach at Malta if he had been moved by vainglory, by foolish self-confidence, by the desire to make an impression of unassailable power. His calmness and fearlessness rested not on himself for an instant, but upon the God in whose hands he was only a trusting instrument.

Thus may it be with us also, when the vipers come hissing out of the fires of life and seize upon our hands and our hearts. And if it is thus with us, we shall shake them off into the fire from which they came, and we shall feel no harm.

XC

THE CUTTING-UP OF CANAAN

ONE of the most remarkable pieces of material and moral engineering is described in the eighteenth chapter of Joshua. I do not know where in all history its like could be found.

Under Joshua's sturdy leadership the land of Canaan had been conquered. To be sure, certain heathen tribes were left, to be thorns in the sides of the Hebrews throughout their national existence, and finally to work by the contagion of iniquity the ruin which their weapons could not accomplish. But, on the whole, the country was won, and Joshua felt that he might rest from his fighting, and lead his nation in the happier arts of peace.

To this end the land was to be divided among the tribes, and the process is full of interest to modern readers.

First came the survey of Canaan. Each tribe appointed three men to represent the tribe and these commissioners went through the country together, noting the cities, their size and condition, the pasture-lands and springs, the regions suitable for tillage, the forests, the elevations, and all other particulars necessary for a comprehensive view of Canaan. All of this information was written down in a book, and the commissioners divided the country into seven parts, Judah having already been granted the southern portion, and the two tribes descended from Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, being given the portion further north. Two and a half tribes were to dwell east of the Jordan, and the tribe of Levi, being supported as priests, received no land.

These divisions having been made, Eleazar the high priest and Joshua the judge solemnly drew lots for the tribes, thus deciding for all time where each tribe should have its abode. It was a momentous scene, big with

history. Suppose, for instance, Benjamin had been thrown to the north and Issachar to the south!

But what chiefly interests me is the success of the difficult division. We read of no grumbling among the tribes. One tribe does not complain that another has more pasture-land than its share, or more farm-land. It was a complicated task, to make a division into which so many factors entered; but the commissioners had done their work so well, and the temper of the people was so good, that every one appears to have been contented.

What a model for us, as we receive our allotments of the Canaan of to-day, the promised land toward which we have struggled up from childhood, and through all the toils and vicissitudes of our active life.

The description of this Canaan also is written in a Book. It is an alluring description, but of necessity, like that of Joshua's time, it deals in many generals and few particulars. Much is to be imagined, and known thoroughly only by intimate use.

The division of our Canaan is not made by lot, though the cynics and sceptics think it is. To each man is assigned just the portion that he can cultivate best, just the section fitted to please him, develop him, and enrich him. The One who presides over this distribution knows every tribesman better than the tribesman knows himself, and understands every acre of the promised land better than the tribesman could understand it if he tilled it a thousand years. There is absolutely no chance of a mistake in the assignment.

Then let us modern children of Dan cease to look askance at the children of Asher, and long for Carmel and its coasts. Is not Hermon more glorious than Carmel? Let us know that the portion assigned to each is for him the land of promise only as he puts into it a love to meet the love that gave it; and let us all "occupy—till He come."

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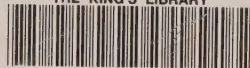
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